The Role of E-Library in Traditional Academic Library: A Case Study of Selected University Libraries in Nigeria

Dr. Posigha, Bassil E*, Dr. Idiedo, Victor O

Niger Delta University Department of Library and Information Science, PMB 071, Wilberforce Island Bayelsa State, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Posigha, Bassil E, Niger Delta University Department of Library and Information Science, PMB 071, Wilberforce Island Bayelsa State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Thus, the difference in the mode of access and the format of the resources, etc has led to the question regarding the role and functions of an e-library in academic libraries. As a result, there is must more to know, whether e-libraries that are established as part of the traditional academic libraries have a different role other than complementing the roles of the traditional libraries. It is against this background that this study aims to ascertain the role, functions, trends, and challenges of e-libraries in the academic libraries in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study: The study aimed to ascertain the role of an e-library in academic libraries in Nigeria. The main objectives of the study are, to establish the role of e-library, determine the functions, trend, and challenges of e-libraries in academic libraries in Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study.

Scope and Limitation of the Study: The population of the study comprises librarians working in academic libraries and the department of library and information science.

Methodology: The study adopted descriptive research design. A questionnaire method was employed to elicit data for the study. The sample sizes of 133 librarians were randomly selected from the various academic institutions in Southern Nigeria and the federal capital of Nigeria, Abuja.

Result: The study established that e-libraries attached to academic libraries play a complementary role in the traditional academic libraries, performed three specific functions, such as education, research, and informative. The study also established that the development of e-libraries is in the average stage. The study also revealed poor funding, inadequate subscription, lack of infrastructure, etc as challenges militating against the development of e-libraries in academic institutions in Nigeria.

Conclusion: E-libraries are fundamental to education particularly in our ICT driven educational system. The e-libraries in traditional academic libraries play a complementary role in the traditional academic libraries.

Recommendation: Government and private institutions should from the planning stage make adequate provision, such as infrastructure, skill staff, funds, etc for the functioning of the e-library section of their institutional libraries

Keywords: E-libraries; Role of E-libraries; Functions of E-libraries; Academic libraries; Traditional libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, libraries were established to serve crucial roles in society. In the library content, a role is a responsibility or activity that is assigned to a library to achieve the purpose of the library. In all types of libraries, there are specific roles that the libraries are expected to play in achieving the aims and objectives of the libraries. For example, in academic institutions, academic libraries perform a supporting role in teaching and learning activities, distance learning programmes and research activities, etc through the provision of information resources, sharing of information, providing enabling environment to bring together people and ideas, provision of unlimited access to remote databases, etc.

Today, the advent of e-libraries has must more make these roles to be easily performed in an accelerated, accurate, and interesting manner. Nevertheless, likely, e-library may not play a different role rather than supporting the traditional libraries' roles. According to pailey (2018) digital (e-library), libraries are full-text databases that replicate, in digital media, many of the functions of traditional libraries. Notwithstanding, the development of libraries across the world has taken

a drastic change as a result of the increased adoption of Information and Communication Technologies (ITCs) in library services. In the time past, good libraries are determined by conducive and aesthetic buildings with enough space for bookshelves, reading space, and as well the number of volumes of books the library is holding. Today, the emphasis has been changed to the number of databases, e-books, e-journals, etc. the libraries are capable of providing access. According to Garbobi (2020), the evolution of the internet and information technologies have transformed many conventional university libraries into electronic or digital libraries where books, journals, magazines, and other information resources have metamorphosed into e-books, e-journals, e-magazines, etc.

Thus, the transformation has introduced new concepts such as the virtual library, digital library, e-library, and hybrid library into the history of the library globally. However, as diverse as the concepts, the concepts denote a library with digital or electronic collections that can be accessed with the aid of ICT devices and the Internet. In this study, an e-library is used to represent the diverse concepts. E-library according to Rosenberg cited in Okiy (2015) is a "library where information resources are made available and accessible in electronic form and the services of the library are also accessible electronically over the Internet". Similarly, Mutula and Ojedokun cited in Okiy (2015) described e-library as a "collections of electronic resources consisting of text, audio, graphics, and animations in nature that are accessible through the aid of digital technologies". The "growth of e-library has been facilitated by the proliferation of electronic information, decreasing budgets for the acquisition of books and journals, need to access remotely-stored information, need to enhance collaboration, partnership, and sharing, the ever-increasing cost of preserving decaying print media and advances in telecommunications, computing, and standard, among others" (Okiy, 2015).

In Nigeria, experience shows that every traditional academic library has a section of the library with a cluster of computers called an e-library. This section of the library referred to as e-library is very important to librarians, researchers, and accreditation bodies. For example, in Nigeria, the National University Commission (NUC) approval or accreditation of any course of study depends on the viable is the e-library in terms of the number of databases available and as well the e-resources accessible to users via the e-

libraries. Today, e-libraries have made it possible for researchers to access thousands of e-resources from their home in their comfort. Thus, the difference in the mode of access and the format of the resources, etc has led to the question regarding the role and functions of an e-library in academic libraries. As a result, there is must more to know, whether e-libraries that are established as part of the traditional academic libraries have a different role other than complementing the roles of the traditional libraries. It is against this background that this study aims to ascertain the role, functions, trends, and challenges of e-libraries in the academic libraries in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to ascertain the role of an e-library in traditional academic libraries in Nigeria. Thus, the study was designed specifically to ascertain the following:

- Whether e-library plays a complementary role in traditional academic libraries.
- To ascertain the functions of e-libraries in traditional academic libraries in Nigeria.
- The know present trend of e-libraries in Nigeria academic libraries.
- The challenges of e-libraries in academic libraries in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided with the following research questions:

- Do e-libraries play a complementary role in traditional academic libraries?
- What are the functions of e-libraries in traditional academic libraries in Nigeria?
- What is the present trend of e-libraries in academic libraries in Nigeria?
- What are the challenges of e-libraries in Nigeria's academic libraries?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the paper reviewed some related theoretical and empirical papers to guide the study.

Arora, Trivedi, and Kembhavi, (2013) attested that digital library provides library services and information resources in an electronic format other than print format and, enhances searching of electronic collections distributed across networks, rather than merely creating electronic

repositories from digitized physical materials. A digital library is a library in which collections are stored in digital formats (as opposed to print, microform, or other media) and accessible by computers. The content may be stored locally, or accessed remotely. This simply means that e-libraries play the same roles as traditional academic libraries. The difference is that the roles or functions are performed electronically.

Yohanna, Darazeem, and Bello (2019) investigated the development of a bookless library (e-libraries) in the North-east. Attention was committed to the following areas: opportunity, usability, and challenges facing academic libraries in North-east Nigeria. The paper highlighted funding, infrastructure, and technology as challenges facing the development of digital libraries in North-east Universities. The study concludes that, though the digital libraries are faced with numerous challenges, however, the university libraries will gradually overcome such challenges with time especially through library collaboration.

Umaru, Aghadiuno, and Mamo (2018) examined e-library services and knowledge management and its application in the contemporary library. The study was further broken down into the definitions and concepts of e-library and knowledge management, their respective roles in the libraries, the role of the librarian, the inherent problems and challenges faced in using the e-library, and some strategies and recommendations in which the problems can be tackled. Traditionally, libraries used to process, store, preserve and disseminate information and information sources through the traditional form of library use, but the application of computers and knowledge management has brought a change to the way librarians and the library operations are being carried out. The introduction of e-services and knowledge management in the library has made it very easy for the end-user to access information, and also for the librarian to be able to source information for his users. With e-services in the library, one can easily have access to library resources without visiting the library.

Otubelu (2016) investigated the challenges of digital libraries for e-learning in federal colleges of education in South-East and South-South Nigeria. The study employed a survey design. The instrument for data collection was a set of interview questions. Six federal colleges of education were used and 18 samples were picked using simple random sampling. The result shows challenges associated with the use of digital libraries for e-learning in the colleges to include: lack of effective access, non-sustainability of the resources, unstable power supply, constraints in building the resources, inadequate training of staff, and technical issues. The solution to these challenges was proffered suggesting that higher institutions in Nigeria should include library digitization into their policies and plans for effective uses and assessment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey method to ascertain the role of an e-library in traditional academic libraries in Nigeria. The population of the study comprises librarians working in university libraries and the department of library and information science. The sample sizes of 133 librarians were randomly selected from the various institutions in Southern Nigeria and the federal capital, Abuja. A questionnaire method was employed to elicit data for the study. The instrument was administered through e-mail to the respondents. Out of the 133 questionnaires administered,130 (98.2%) were duly filled and returned. The data elicited from the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple frequency count and percentage, and mean. Thus, the items with a mean score of 2.50 and above are regarded as agreeing while a mean score of less than 2.50 is interpreted as not disagree.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section of the paper presented and discussed the findings of the study. The data are presented in the tables below.

Table1. *Institutions participated in the study*

Names of institutions participated in the study			
1	University of Ibadan (UI)	2	Enugu state university of technology (ESUT)
3	Niger Delta University (NDU	4	Delta state university, Abraka (DELSU)
5	University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT)	6	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
7	University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)	8	University of Lagos (UNILAG)
9	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	10	Chrisland University, Abeokuta
11	University of Abuja	12	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo
13	University of Africa, Bayelsa State		

The Role of E-Library in Traditional Academic Library: A Case Study of Selected University Libraries in Nigeria
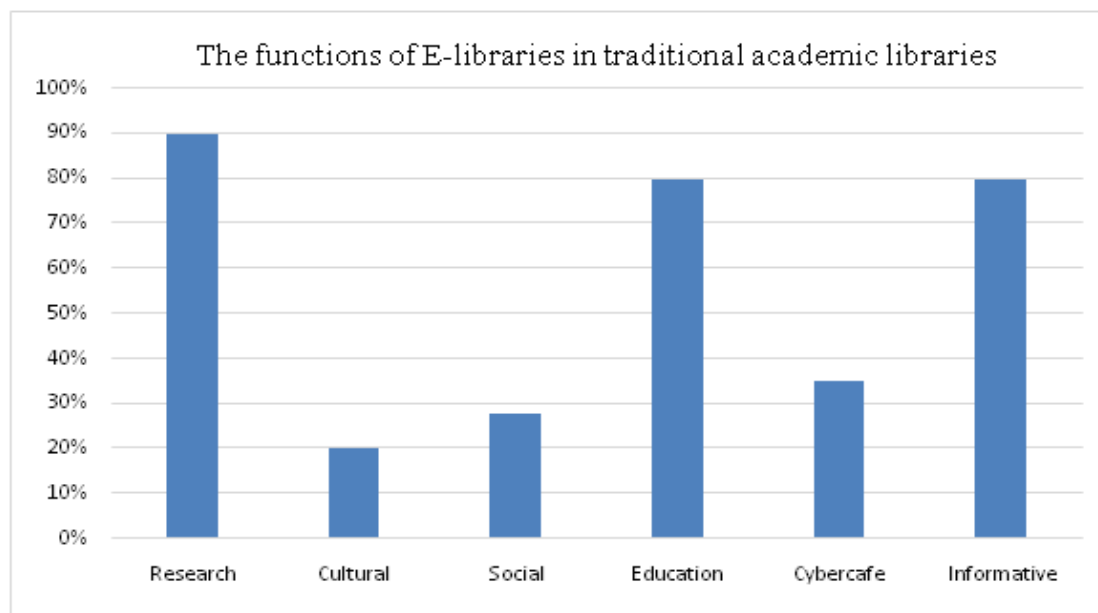
Librarians' in thirteen federal, state and private own universities participated in the survey. Twelve of universities are situated in Sothern Nigeria and one in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria.

Table2. *The function of e-libraries in traditional academic libraries*

S/N	Item	Cumulative response	Mean ($\underline{X}$)	Decision
1	E-libraries play a complementary role in traditional academic libraries.	410	3.15	Agree

The above table shows the role of e-libraries in traditional academic libraries in Nigeria. The mean ($\underline{X}$) score of 3.15 of the item is above the cut-off 2.50. This simply 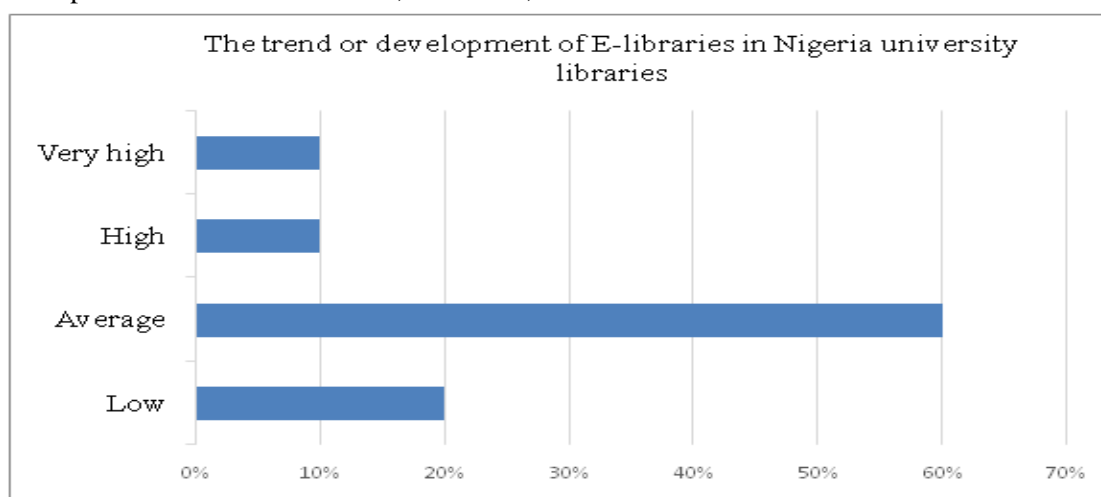implies that the respondents agree that e-libraries in academic libraries play a complementary function in traditional academic libraries.

Figure1. *The functions of E-libraries in traditional academic libraries*

The above bar chart shows the basic functions of e-libraries in academic libraries in Nigeria. The data revealed that 117(90%) and 104(80%)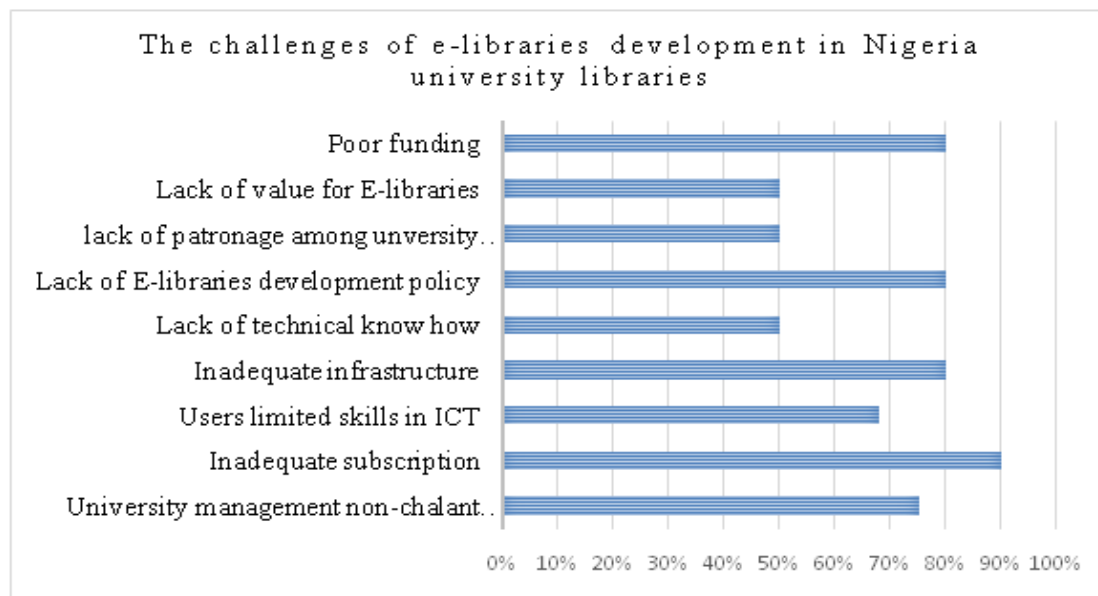 of the respondents indicated research, education, and informative as the major functions of e-libraries established in academic libraries in Nigeria. Other functions such as Cybercafe, social and cultural functions are also indicated.

Figure2. *The trend or development of e-libraries in Nigeria university libraries*

The above bar chart, figure II revealed the present trend or development of E-libraries in academic libraries in Nigeria. The analysis shows 78(60%) indicated average while, 26(20%), 13(10%) indicated low, high, and very high respectively.

Figure3. *The challenges of E-libraries development in Nigeria university libraries*

The above bar chart, figure III shows the challenges of e-libraries development in academic libraries in Nigeria. The analysis reveals that inadequate subscription 117(90%), lack of e-libraries development policy, poor funding and inadequate infrastructure 104(80%), university management nonchalant attitude towards e-libraries development 98(75%), and users limited ICT skills 88(68%) as the challenges ofe-libraries development. Other challenges such as lack of patronage among university administration and lack of technical know-how 65(50%) were also indicated.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research question one sought to establish the role of e-libraries in academic libraries in Nigeria. The study established that e-libraries attached to traditional academic libraries play a complementary role in traditional academic libraries. This might be the fact that most of the e-libraries are situated in the same building as the traditional libraries, and do not have different aims and objectives other than the ones of the traditional academic libraries. While the traditional academic libraries build a collection on print and non-print materials, the e-libraries are on e-resources only. This might be the reason why the majority of the librarians who participated in the study seese-libraries as complimenting the roles of traditional academic libraries.

Thus, research question two sought to ascertain the specific functions of e-libraries in traditional academic libraries. Based on the analysis of the study, the study ascertained that e-libraries play three specific functions, such as education, research, and informative. Other functions included

cybercafé, cultural, and aesthetic functions. These functions do not differ from the traditional academic libraries' functions. This could be that both libraries are established to support the teaching and learning objectives of their parent institutions at such do not have different functions.

Similarly, research question three sought to establish the trend or development of e-libraries in academic libraries in Nigeria. The study established that the development of e-libraries is in the average stage. This might be as a result of one challenge or the other facing the establishment and functioning of e-libraries in the education sector of the country. It could also be that e-libraries were not considered when establishing traditional academic libraries.

Research question four also sought to ascertain the challenges militating against the development of e-libraries in academic libraries in Nigeria. The study established that poor funding, inadequate subscription, lack of infrastructure, lack of policy towards the establishment of e-libraries, and others are challenges militating against the development and functioning of e-libraries in academic institutions in Nigeria. This might be as a result of some university management's nonchalant attitude regarding issues concerning subscription, infrastructures, funding, etc. in academic libraries.

CONCLUSION

E-libraries are fundamental to education particularly in our ICT driven educational system. The e-libraries in traditional academic libraries play a complementary role in the

traditional academic libraries by providing access to materials outside the physical traditional academic libraries that are stored in remote websites, databases, and other storage devices. In addition to the provision of access to remote materials, e-libraries play some specific functions. These functions include education, research, informative, etc. Nevertheless, these functions are not different from the functions of traditional academic libraries but the speed and ease at which services are rendered in e-libraries make these functions unique. However, despite the importance of e-libraries in providing fast educative, research, and informative services, the development of e-libraries is still in the average stage. The deserved attention has not been given to the development of e-libraries in traditional academic libraries in Nigeria. Several challenges are still prohibiting the development of e-libraries. Prominent among these challenges are poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, and inadequate subscription.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Government and private individuals that are responsible for the establishment of higher institutions should from the planning stage make adequate provision, such as infrastructure, skill staff, funds, etc for the functioning of the e-library section of their institutional libraries.

- University management should note that majority of e-library's collections are not owned by the institution libraries, they are own by private individuals and public organizations.

The resources can only be accessed through a subscription. Therefore, the management should make policy regarding funding, regular subscription, and smooth running of the e-library.

REFERENCES

[1] Arora, J., Trivedi, K. J & Kembhavi, A. (2013). Impact of access to e-resources through the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium on research output of member universities. *Current Science Journal*, 104 (3&10), 1 - 9.

[2] Garbobi, M. (2020). Management of university libraries in digital environment: Problems and prospects in Taraba State University, Janligo, Nigeria. *Research Journal of Library and Information Science*, 4(1), 1- 6.

[3] Okiy, R. B. (2015). History of libraries (2nd Ed). Benin city: Ambik press.

[4] Otubelu N. J. (2016). Challenges of digital libraries for effective e-learning in Nigeria. Proceedings of *ISERD* International Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, 19th July 2016. Pp. 2 – 4.

[5] Pailey, D. (2018). Digital library in academic environment. Accessed 8th October, 2020 from www.seminarstopics.com.

[6] Umaru, I. A., Aghadiuno, P. C. & Mamo, I. M. (2018). The potentials of electronic libraries (e-libraries) in knowledge management in contemporary libraries in Nigeria. International Journal of Library and Information Science Studies 4(2), 13-20. Accessed 27 August, 2020 from www.eajournals.org.

[7] Yohanna, P., Darazeem, A. O. & Bello, R. A. (2019). Bookless Library in Nigeria: Current Trends and Issues. International Journal of Library and Information Studies, 9(2), 121 – 130.