

## **Nigerian University Libraries' Preparedness in the Provision of Electronic Books to Users: A Reality Check**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the readiness and use of electronic books for information service provision in university libraries in Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted while a multi-stage sampling technique was used to select two universities from each of the six geopolitical zones based on electronic books' availability in the university libraries. A questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection, while data collected were analysed with the use of descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that the level of institutional readiness is below 50%, while the majority of the respondents agreed that electronic books are useful for information service provision. The study recommended that universities should increase financial resources available to the university libraries in the area of ICT facilities acquisition among others.

**Keywords:** University Libraries, E-Books, Information Services Provision

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The rapid advances made in technology have greatly influenced contemporary education. The changes affect not only the methods of teaching but also the resources used in teaching and learning and information provision in the libraries. One of these changes is manifested in the use of electronic or e-books. According to Sasson, (2017), an electronic book or e-book is a book in electronic format. Vassilion, and Rowley (2008), argue that e-books are digital or electronic in nature. The electronic nature of e-books makes it easy to be downloaded to a computer, laptop, smartphones, and any other kind of reading device. They are read on the screen as they are machine-readable. After downloading from any source on the Internet, e-books can be read offline or printed.

In simplifying the concept of an e-book, Ronse (2017) argued that an e-book is an electronic version of a traditional printed book that can be read with the use of a personal computer or by using an e-book reader. The definition also includes any book that is capable of being read on a computer or any electronic device including tablets, smartphones, laptops, etc.

In our contemporary educational system, academic libraries that include those libraries in the universities, polytechnic, colleges of education now acquire e-book to complement the traditional printed books in libraries according to Ronse (2017), e-books have now become a standard platform in providing reading materials. In universities, financial resources are now being spent in procuring electronic books thereby making the library more attractive as clients with an information technology background find it very convenient to use in the pursuit of their academic activities. Electronic books offer some benefits and advantages, which look irresistible to the user of the modern-day library. Samson (2017) highlights some benefits and advantage of e-books as follows:

- i. E-books are delivered almost instantaneously. You can purchase, download, and start reading them within minutes, without leaving your chair. You don't have to go to bookstores to buy them, neither wait for them for days, weeks, and sometimes more to arrive in the mail.
- ii. No trees are required to manufacture paper for the pages of e-books
- iii. When you need certain information, you can get it immediately, by downloading an e-book
- iv. Many e-books are sold nowadays with bonuses, which you usually do not get with a printed book. This adds value to your purchase.
- v. E-books take up less space. You practically do not need any space to store them. You do not need a library or a room for them. You can store hundreds and thousands of e-books on your computer or reading device.
- vi. E-books are portable. You can carry a whole library of hundreds of books with you, on CD, in a laptop, notebook, any e-book, or an e-book reader, without worrying about their weight.

Writing on the effects of e-books concerning the change in the access to information, Ronse (2017), argued that with electronic books, information now transcends beyond the boundaries and is available and accessible at any time.

On the lure of the e-books, Bello, et, al (2018), argued that e-books are enormously attractive to very large and important academic communities largely untouched by the arrival of an e-journal, which has revolutionized the information-seeking behavior of many academics, scientists, and researchers in particular. Writing on the origin of e-books, Yaya cited in Davis (1991), argued that e-books were books originally published in a traditional way, and then digitized for use as an electronic book or they can be books that were written purposely for the digital market. By the nature of e-books, they are all machine-readable. A specific machine called an e-book reader is used to make them readable.

In Nigerian University systems, the emergency and integration of e-books in the collection of the university libraries have been at a very slow pace, hence the need to investigate the readiness of these institutions about the adoption and use of e-books. Given the above benefits and advantage of electronic books, the amount of money spent on the subscription of these resources, it has been observed that these resources are either sparingly utilized or not utilized at all. In their studies, Wogu and Obayi cited in Ronse (2017), identified the challenges that affect the use of e-books to include irregularity of power and internet connections, irregularity of e-book subscription, and the need to make e-books producers make e-books use friendly. It was against this background that the study was conducted to determine the university libraries' preparedness in Nigeria in their provision of e-books to their clients.

### **1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The broad objective of the study is to determine the readiness and use of electronic books for information services provision in university libraries in Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i. ascertain the institutional readiness for information service provision and use of electronic books in the university libraries in Nigeria,
- ii. determine the perceived usefulness of electronic books in information service provision in the university libraries in Nigeria.
- iii.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method adopted for the study is survey design. The population of this study was six hundred and thirty-six (636). This comprised all library staff from twelve university libraries. To arrive at this, a preliminary survey was conducted to ensure that all the university libraries selected had electronic books in their collections. The study used total enumeration to arrive at a sample size of Six hundred and thirty-six (636) respondents. A questionnaire was sent to 636 and 420 respondents filled in the questionnaire representing a 66.1% response rate. This survey method effectively elicited information on the e-books' institutional readiness, level of awareness of the use, and the challenges of using e-books in the universities under study. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics frequency count, mean, and percentages.

## 3. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 3.1 Distribution of Respondents by University

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by the university. Many respondents were drawn from University of Ibadan and University of Nigeria respectively (table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by university

S/N	University	Frequency	Percentage
1	Covenant University Library	21	5.0%
2	University of Ibadan Library	64	15.1%
3	Federal University of Petroleum Library	18	4.4%
4	University of Port-Harcourt Library	37	8.8%
5	Bayero University Library	50	11.9%
6	Umaru Musa Yar'adu University	29	6.9%
7	University of Nigeria, Library	58	13.8%
8	Federal University of Technology	34	8.2%
9	University of Maiduguri Library	21	5.0%
10	Usmanu Danfodiyo University	32	7.5%
11	Benue State University Library	32	7.5%
12	Salem University Lokoja Library	24	5.7%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 below shows that the level of university libraries' readiness concerning most of the items in the questionnaire is below 50%. On the availability of ICT facilities in the university libraries under study, the

majority of the respondents representing 384 (91.4%) disagreed with the statement. The majority also disagreed on the availability of internet connectivity with 376 (89.4%) respondents indicating it. Management support for the use of e-books in the university libraries was not supported by the majority as 354(84.2%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while lack of skilled manpower disagreed with the majority of 324 representing (77.1%) of the respondents. The majority also disagreed on the issue of alternative sources of power supply for the use of electronic book facilities as 310 (75.8%) of the respondents indicating it. Another disagreement is on the issue of provision of staff training on the use of web 2.00 tools. The majority of the respondents 244 representing 58.6 percent of the respondents indicated it.

Table 2: University libraries' readiness for the provision of e-books in Nigeria

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA/A</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>SD/D</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
ICT facilities are readily available for the use of e-books in the library.	36	8.9	384	91.4	420	100
There is enough space in the library for the storage of e-books	272	64.7	148	35.2	420	100
There is internet connectivity in the library for the use of e-books	44	10.4	376	89.5	420	100
There is equipment like an air-conditioner in the library for the preservation of e-books	242	57.6	158	42.4	420	100
There is a management policy, which supports the use of e-books in the	66	15.7	354	84.2	420	100
The library has sufficient skilled manpower to man the e-books facilities	96	22.8	324	77.2	420	100
There is an alternative source of power supply to ensure regular power supply to use the e-books	110	26.1	310	73.8	420	100
There is a provision for staff training on the use of e-books facilities.	176	41.3	244	58.6	420	100

However, only two items on the table recorded high levels of institutional readiness with more than 50% agreement. These include the issue of space in the libraries for the storage of e-books facilities this was indicated by majority with 272 representing (64.7%) of the respondents, while the statement on equipment like Air conditioners etc as indicated by the majority with 242 representing 57.6 of the respondents.

From the analysis above it is very clear that the institutional readiness of the university libraries understudy is low. The reason for this is not unconnected with the fact that ICT facilities for the use of electronic books is capital intensive and would therefore need institutional will on the part of the universities to meet it.

Table 3 shows how e-books are perceived in terms of being useful in the provision of information services.

Table 3: The perceived usefulness of e-books in information service provision

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA/A</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>SD/D</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
The use of e-books bridges time and space in information services provision	324	77.1	96	22.8	420	100
The use of e-books minimizes cost and efforts in information service provision	310	73.8	110	26.1	420	100
The use of e-books in information services provision maximize quality	272	64.7	148	35.2	420	100
The use of e-book maximize efficiency and effectiveness	242	57.6	158	42.4	420	100

Table 3 above shows, majority of the respondents agreed that e-books are useful for information service provision in their libraries. Their positions are corroborated in a study by Alabi cited in Madu, and Ademiran, (2005), which argued that whenever technology intervenes in human activities, the essential feature is how to bridge time, space, to minimize cost and efforts as well as maximize quality, efficiency and effectiveness: PI. The findings in the study are also in line with the position of Scott-Emuakpor, (2000), who argued that with the ability to retrieve remote sources on the internet, it is now possible to

provide the needed information when the need is made manifest. This is also in line with the position of Hangging and Sinate (2012) who argued that the preference for the use of electronic books for information service provision occasioned by new technologies is because of their ease of accessibility and use.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that the level of readiness of the institutions for the use of e-books in the university libraries understudy is low. This is evident by the lack of ICT facilities in the university libraries studied. On the perceived usefulness of e-books in information service provision, the majority of the respondents agreed that e-books are useful for information service provision in their university libraries. The following recommendations are proposed for possible implementation by university libraries in Nigeria:

- i. The university administrations should show more political will by increasing financial resources available to the university libraries to enable them to acquire more ICT facilities especially e-book readers.
- ii. Training programmes should be organized for the library staff to acquire skills in the use of e-books, and also enhance their ICT skills in general.
- iii. The universities should provide alternative sources of power supply to use the e-book facilities.

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