

**APPLICATION OF ONLINE INFORMATION SEARCH SKILLS FOR
RETRIEVAL OF ONLINE INFORMATION RESOURCES AMONG
SELECTED ACADEMICS OF FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,
ZARIA**

By

Ibrahim SAIDU
Ahmadu Bello University

Shuaibu DANBABA
Ahmadu Bello University

Haruna ALHASSAN
Ahmadu Bello University

Ibrahim DOGARA
Ahmadu Bello University

Abstract

This study investigated application of online information search skills for retrieval of online information resources among selected academics of federal college of education, Zaria. The objectives of the study was to find out types of online information search skills are possessed by selected academics for retrieval of online information resources, types of online information search strategies used for retrieval of online information resources among selected academics and examine the means by which the selected academics have access to online information for retrieval of online information resources in Federal College of Education Zaria. A quantitative research method was adopted, and a case study research design was employed in the conduct of this study. The population of this study consists of twenty-nine (29) academics in the Department of Arabic at the Federal College of Education, Zaria. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. A total of twenty-nine (29) copies of the questionnaire were administered to Selected academics at the Federal College of Education, Zaria, with a total return rate of 28 (96.6%). The data collected for the study were presented and analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency count, simple percentage, and mean. The findings arising from the studies indicated that the types of online information search skills possessed by academics in Federal College of Education Zaria were the ability to think before searching, the ability to search a specific site, the ability to search by author, the ability to search by

keyword, and the ability to keep it simple. The types of online information search strategies used for retrieval of online information resources by academics were the use of a search engine, the use of a file search, and the use of phrase searching. Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that the majority of academics in FCE Zaria were not accessing and utilizing available online information resources due to a lack of online information search skills and search strategies. This could be necessitated due to the lack of information literacy skills and problems associated with the current trend in ICT. Therefore, the study recommended that there is a need for training on how to access and make use of the available online information resources with different search skills and search strategies. The Federal College of Education Zaria College library should take a leading role in creating more training programs among academics on online information search skills such as ability to narrow search, ability to use punctuation, ability to apply filters, ability to search by subject, ability to search by standard number, and ability to search by title. And the college library should organize workshops for academics on how to effectively search online information resources with different types of online information search strategies such as the use of Boolean operators, truncation, proximity search, parenthesis, and wildcards

Keyword: Academics, online information search skill, information resources

Introduction

Online Information search skills involve a series of activities and capabilities that an individual adopts in order to locate where information is, its types and formats, and ways of accessing the information. It also involves ways of retrieving, evaluating, and utilizing information. According to the Library Guide (2021), information search skills are viewed as consisting of a series of activities aimed at finding information.

Online information retrieval refers to the process of seeking and obtaining specific information from digital sources available on the Internet. According to (Britannica) It involves using various tools, techniques, and search strategies to locate relevant information based on user queries. The retrieval of online information resources by academics extends into the realm of the use of e-resources, which is now commonplace among academics in tertiary educational institutions all over the globe. Many academics, including those in universities, are exploring the opportunities of e-resources to facilitate teaching, learning, and research. The use of e-resources is increasing, particularly among academics.

Statement of the Problem

Information search skills play a crucial role in academic lives, as they enable them to find and evaluate useful information related to a specific topic of their interest. These skills include performing investigations, critical analysis, and forming solutions to particular problems. Academics value search skills and benefit employees in all positions. Having these skills is imperative to advancing your career, as they directly relate to your ability to gain insight and inspire action in both yourself and others. Search skills are necessary for information seekers for several reasons, including allowing individuals to: identify problems that hinder performance or task completion; come up with viable solutions to identified problems; and evaluate online information resources and the most effective way to use them to promote increased efficiency; come up with novel services or products; identify the needs of a target customer and better meet those needs through products and services; Time management, Stay up-to-date with vital trends, and lastly, learn new ways of doing things to adapt and evolve to meet information needs. Search skills are necessary for information seekers for several reasons, including allowing individuals to: identify problems that hinder performance or task completion; come up with viable solutions to those problems; evaluate online information resources and the most effective way to use them to promote increased efficiency; Come up with novel services or products; identify the needs of a target customer and better meet those needs through products and services; manage time; Stay up-to-date with vital trends. Learn new ways of doing things to adapt and evolve to meet information needs.

Despite the importance of information search skills coupled with the shift from print to electronic-based resources, search skills are minimally utilized by Arabic academics. As observed by the researcher, low utilization of these information resources may be attributed to low search skills. This above factor could be due to technophobia, inadequate search skills, or a lack of awareness. This could result in poor-quality teaching, learning, and research. This could affect their performance as they spend long hours searching for specialty information resources.

Objective of the Study

1. To find out the type of information search skills for retrieval of online specialized information resources among selected academics at Federal College of Education Zaria.
2. To identify the types of information search strategies used for retrieval of online information resources among selected academics at Federal College of Education Zaria.

3. To examine the means by which selected academics have access to online information for retrieval of online information resources at Federal College of Education Zaria.

Literature Review

The concept of online information Search skills can be expressed as organized activities through which a person conducts a literature search on the internet and in databases. They refer to a set of experience search statements entered into a search system to retrieve desired information resources. Also, online information Search skills employed or used by library users, mean access to online information resources that are domiciled on the internet and databases. This is the purpose of using online information resources.

According to Brehm (2019), information search skills can be defined as the application and organization of search keywords and symbols in order to conduct an effective search in an online environment and extend or narrow his or her search results accordingly. Online search is an interactive and dynamic process with the ability to provide immediate feedback to the information seeker and has the following characteristics: System's ability to interact with the user (feedback and therefore refinement of search skills, Remote access, Currency, Faster access to information and Multi-user applications.

Similarly, Kinengyere (2017) found that e-journals and other e-resources are not necessarily accessed and used by users. The study shows that the availability of information does not necessarily mean actual use because the academician may not be aware of the availability of such resources and may not know how to access them. Sharma (2009) and Ibrahim (2014) have all reported that e-journals are the most used among the array of available electronic resources. Also, Santhi and Radhakrishnan (2014) examined, in a study titled "Usage Pattern of Electronic Resources among the Research Scholars at Anna University of Technology", The findings of this study indicated that the University of Coimbatore reported that 20% of researchers and scholars are using the e-resources at their campus, and 5% replied that they are using e-resources outside campus, like computer centers and at home. The majority of the respondents (73%) access e-resources both on campus and off campus. It was further observed that 86% of research scholars are using e-books for their research and that 52% of research scholars are using e-databases for their research.

In the same vein, Falk, (2015) discussed the different types of online information sources. The databases are mainly divided into two major divisions: i) reference databases and ii) source databases, which further categories as

bibliographic databases, full text databases, statistical databases, and image databases on the basis of the nature and scope of the contents. Online databases open up great opportunities for academicians and researchers to find and access a corpus of knowledge. They have emerged as very valuable and useful sources for time-saving and R&D activities. Some popular online databases, including Emerald Insight, Science Direct, and JSTOR, have provided library users with opportunities and sources for learning. Users from different academic fields all over the world use online databases to seek the latest information in their areas of study and to consult different electronic resources. However, use of online databases in academics has grown substantially in recent years, although problems of access, lack of skills, and applicability of information remain barriers to effective use of online databases as a source of information. Online search is used to describe the process of posing a query to an information system in order to fulfill a specific request (Mus, 2015).

Online information search skills are activities learned during the time of studies at colleges or universities to help not only in the time of studying but throughout life, at any time when the need to find and use online information resources arises. Those are various types of information search skills used by information seekers.

Granite School District (2022) identified the types of online information search skills which are ability to think before searching, ability to keep it simple, ability to be specific, capitalize, ability to capitalize, ability to punctuate and spell, ability to narrow search results.

In addition to the above definition, Xie (2010) sees that search skills comprise a systematic set of different approaches that take into account both planned and situational elements. However, one could relate search skills to a plan that the information seeker employed to achieve his academic research activities. Search strategies are series of processes, techniques, and ways in which researchers adopt them in order to locate where information is, its types and formats, and ways of accessing the information. It also involves ways of retrieving, evaluating, and utilizing information. These methods are updated regularly to keep pace with the speeding growth of the information volume. Search tools are equipped with facilities with which users should be familiar if they are to make the best use of them. Searching strategies differ from one tool to another. But in general, all of them have common characteristics, an understanding of which is important for the user's effective application of such systems. According to Life Pacific University LPU (2019), "the seven most frequently used online searching techniques are: Boolean Searching; Phrase

Searching; Proximity Searching; Field Searching; Truncation; Parenthesis; Synonyms.

According to Life Pacific University, LPU Boolean Searching involves a structured search process that allows the user to insert words or phrases such as AND, OR, and NOT to limit, broaden, and define the search results. Phrase searching narrows the search results by allowing you to define precisely how you want the words to appear. Proximity searching includes searching with keywords that the user wants to be adjacent to each other, Field Searching: This search term limits the search to a specific field.

Methodology

A quantitative methodology was adopted for the study because it involves the process of collecting and analyzing numerical data. The purpose of using quantitative research methodology is to generate knowledge and create understanding about the social world (Allen, 2017). and a case study research design was employed in the conduct of this study because it is an appropriate method for investigating a specific phenomenon or case in depth and in context. According to Dwivedi, (2021) a case study is suitable when you want to gain concrete, contextual, in-depth knowledge about a real-world subject and explore its key characteristics, meanings, and implications. The total population is 29, which is comprised of selected academics at the Federal College of Education, Zaria. The entire population was used to collect data using questionnaire as instrument.

Result and Discussion

Descriptive statistics in the form of frequency count, simple percentage, and mean were used to analyze the data relating to the research questions raised for this study. 50% response and a 1.3 mean score were used as benchmarks for decision-making; anything less than that is considered negative.

Table 1: Online Information Search Skills Employ for Retrieval of Online Information Resources

Type of online information search skills	Freq	%	Mean
Ability to think before search	28	100%	2.5
Ability to keep it simple	15	53.6%	1.3
Ability to narrow search results	12	42.9%	1.0

Ability to use punctuations	0	00%	0.0
Ability to apply filters	0	00%	0.0
Ability to search by Author	25	89.3%	2.3
Ability to search specific site	26	92.9%	2.4
Ability to search by Subject	13	46.4%	1.2
Ability to search by standard number	0	00%	0.0
Ability to search by Title	5	17.9%	0.5
Ability to search by keyword	25	89.3%	2.3

In Table 1: above, it was discovered that ability to think before searching was the type of online information search skill possessed by Selected academics, with the highest response of 96.4% and the mean value of (2.5), while ability to search specific sites had a percentage of 92.9% and the mean value of (2.4), followed by ability to search by author with a percentage of 89.3% and the mean value of (2.3), and ability to search by keyword with a percentage of 89.3% and the mean value of (2.3) responses scores by the academics in FCE Zaria, Whereas ability to narrow search results were the types of online information search skills possessed by Selected academics for retrieval of online information resources with the lowest percentage of less than 42.9% and the mean value of (1.0) responses scores, respectively.

However, a further observation from the table indicated above indicates that the ability to use punctuation, the ability to apply filters, and the ability to search by standard number were completely unknown to the selected academics. This may be connected to the fact that the majority of selected academics may not consider online resources as sources of information for their academic activities. The above finding is not surprising because, on the one hand, today's information provides a vast amount of resources to support academic activities, but they are underutilized due to poor knowledge of the different types of online information search skills. This finding is supported by that of Kinengyere (2017), who found out that the availability of information does not necessarily mean actual use because the academician may not be aware of the availability of online information resources and may not know how to access these resources.

Table 2: Online Information Search Strategy Used for Retrieval of Information Resources among Selected academics in FCE Zaria

Type of online information search strategy	Freq.	%	Mean
Use of Boolean operators	0	00%	0.0
Use of truncation	0	00%	0.0
Use of search engine	27	96.4%	3.4
Use of proximity search	0	00%	0.0
Use of field search	24	85.7%	3.0
Use of parenthesis	4	14.3%	0.5
Use of wildcards	0	00%	0.0
Use of phrase searching	18	64.3%	2.3

The findings in Table 2: above revealed that use of search engines was the type of online information search strategy used for retrieval of online information resources, with the highest percentage of over 96.4% and a mean value of (3.4). This is followed by field search with 85.7% and a mean value of 3.0. Moreover, the ability to use parenthesis earned the lowest percentage of less than 14.3% and a mean value of (0.5).

Additionally, it was observed in the table that selected academics did not use Boolean operators, truncation, proximity search, and wildcards. This may be connected to the fact that the majority of Selected academics may not be vast in terms of search strategies to employ when searching for online information for their teaching and learning activities. The aforementioned findings are not surprising because, on the other hand, information overload provides a great number of resources to support academic pursuits, but they are underutilized due to poor knowledge of the different types of online information search strategies. This is in contradiction with the study of Life Pacific University (2019), where they discovered "seven most frequently used online searching techniques, including Boolean Searching, Phrase Searching, Proximity Searching, Field Searching, Truncation, Parenthesis, and Synonyms, which are also used by their academics.

Table 3: Means of Accessing Online Information for Retrieval of Information Resources by Selected academics in FCE Zaria.

Means of accessing online information for retrieval of information resources by Selected academics in FCE Zaria.			
	Freq	%	Mean
Using Internet (LAN or wireless)	6	21.4%	1.0
Using GSM Network	21	75.0%	3.5
Using Internet Café	10	35.7%	1.6
Using Modem	16	57.1%	2.6
Through library website	0	00%	0.0
Using Search Engines	19	67.9%	3.2

The findings in Table 3: above revealed that using GSM networks was the means of accessing online information with the highest percentage of 75.0% and a mean value of (3.5). This was followed by search engines with 67.9% and a mean value of (3.2), whereas personal modems were used with 57.2% and a mean value of (2.6).

Furthermore, using Internet cafés was also another means of accessing online information, with a percentage of 35.8% and a mean value of (1.6), whereas Internet (LAN or wireless) obtained the least percentage of 21.4% and a mean value of (1.0) responses, respectively. This is due to a lack of Internet connectivity in their offices and poor ICT facilities. While the library website is completely not exist. However, a further observation from the table above indicated that the study went further to discover that the college library website is not put in place to serve the entire college with the vast information resources they need. This finding is supported by the earlier finding of Musa (2015) report that academics access and use online Arabic information resources available. The study also revealed that the respondents indicated smart phone (GSM) connectivity and personal modem as the means of accessing online Arabic information resources at Bayero University. Due to a lack of Internet connectivity in their respective offices, the respondents access online Arabic information resources through Google search engines and other online mediums instead of searching through available online library databases. Another study by Brehm

(2019) reveals that most research scholars at Delhi University used search engines more than subject gateways or Web directories to locate information. This finding is not agreed upon by Ansari (2017), who noted that a majority of research scholars and faculty members, New Delhi, India, and Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, were able to access online databases through the central university library website. This shows that there is a need for the Federal College of Education to develop an active website for the college library, and the library should organize more training for their academics, especially those teaching Arabic, on the use of online information resources, i.e., information literacy skills and online information search strategies.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that the majority of selected academics in FCE Zaria were not accessing and utilizing available online information resources due to a lack of online information search skills and search strategies. This could be necessitated due to the lack of information literacy skills and problems associated with the current trend of ICT gadgets. Therefore, they need training on how to access and make use of the available online information resources with different search skills and search strategies. To compete in the 21st-century library market, the college should adopt global best practices and immediately create the college library website. This will enhance the college's teaching and research operations. If all Selected academics were trained on how to access and adopt search skills and search strategies on the online information resources available, there would be a high level of online access and usage, higher quality teaching and research activities, and above all, high levels of satisfaction with the online information resources among Selected academics at FCE Zaria.

Recommendations

1. The Federal College of Education Zaria College library should take a leading role in creating more training programs among academics on online information searches skills such as the ability to narrow the search, ability to use punctuation, ability to apply filters, ability to search by subject, ability to search by standard number, and ability to search by title.
2. The College Library should organize workshops for academics on how to effectively search online information resources with different types of online information search strategies such as Boolean operators, truncation, proximity search, parenthesis, and wildcards.
3. The federal college of education management should create a college library website and link it to different databases, both open access and subscribed, to be among the 21st-century libraries. This will enhance the college's teaching and

research operations. Furthermore, the college should provide internet connectivity (LAN or wireless) to each lecturer's office to enable the library to provide online services to them from the comfort of their offices.

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