

Options For Access To Journals, Print, CD-ROM, On-Line In A Nigerian Agricultural University Library

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the use and the most preferred among printed journals, CD-ROM database and On-line database available to researcher at the Library of the University of Agriculture Abeokuta. To elicit the necessary information, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to 200 final year students and postgraduate students of the Institution out of which there were 142 responses. Analysis of the questionnaire shows that the users preferred the CD-ROM database particularly 'The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library' (TEEAL), this was followed by the print journals. The paper recommends adequate publicity of the electronic journals available in the library and a demonstration of their use once or twice a session for the users.

Introduction

In the past two decades, there has been a tremendous explosion in the information technologies industry. This has made the use of computer-based systems in libraries and information centers comparatively commonplace. New electronic forms of communication have multiplied, reducing the primacy of the print medium, but not yet displacing it. Instead, each new form of communication has supplemented printing and publishing. Computer and telecommunications technologies have allowed libraries to develop services that would have been almost impossible to offer earlier. Some of these have developed logically as extension of traditional services. Steep rises in journal production costs and continuing developments in computer technology have motivated scholars to search actively for an alternative form to traditional paper journals by experimenting with the possibility of e-journals using computers in conjunction with communication networks. Print journals, CD-ROM and On-line databases have enabled libraries to have instant access to contents, easily and conveniently to substantial amount of relatively current and retrospective information.

The excellence of the programme of any university is hinged on the quality of its library. The University of Agriculture Abeokuta was established in 1988. Prominent among its roles is the need to emphasize teaching, research and extension services (UNAAB 1988). The University library named 'Nimbe Adedipe Library' after the pioneering Vice-Chancellor has over 70 foreign and local printed journal titles in various disciplines. The library subscribes to some electronic journals on CD-ROM and On-line. Prominent among them is 'The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library' (TEEAL) otherwise known as 'Library in a Box'. It is a full text database that provides instant access to about 140 of the world's most important scholarly agricultural journals. The

database makes it possible for libraries in resource poor countries to have access to relatively current agricultural journals using the CD-ROM format. Other CD-ROM databases available in the library include CAB ABSTRACT, AGRICOLA, TROPAG and RURAL, for researchers in the area of agriculture and related sciences.

The most recently launched e-journal by the university is Access to Global On-line Research in Agriculture (AGORA). It is an Internet Portal collection that provides link to the resources. It provides free access to major scientific journals, bibliographic databases covering agriculture and related sciences.

Objectives of the Study

Apparently there are 3 medium of journal content presentation print journals and e-journals on CD-ROM and On-line in the library to choose from by the users. Hence, it becomes necessary to investigate the most preferred one by the users. This study therefore sets out to investigate the most preferred by the users among the three medium of journal content presentation.

Literature Review

A major characteristic of the information age is the growth of information services of various kinds. The advent of computers have increased the awareness of the value of information in personal, organizational and national activities. It has promoted the development and growth of diverse new information services based on modern information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Internet (Nzotta 1991).

In a comparative study on the use of electronic periodicals and printed periodicals, Rudner, Miller-Whitehead and Gellman (2002) observed that the large difference between printed periodicals and electronic periodicals (e-journals) indicates that the readership of electronic periodicals is clearly not the same as their print version since there were more readership of traditional printed periodicals.

Based on their findings, they suggested to editors and publishers of on-line periodicals to emphasize and solicit for papers on current topics, select materials that recognize the diverse nature of the audience, provide for permanently archiving published articles, get the journal indexed by Education Index and the Current Index to journals in Education; gather and publish usage statistics and educate potential authority and tenure committees on the impact and value of their On-line periodicals.

In a related study Palmer and Sandler (2003) reported on a two-year research project undertaken at Michigan University, on the use of printed and electronic periodical among faculty in the social sciences. Extensive interviews were conducted with 61 faculty members in three social sciences disciplines: economics, sociology and anthropology. The results indicated that the faculty likes electronic periodicals and expressed preference for electronic access by overwhelming margin. The main theme underlying this preference is that of convenience in the way that an article can be consulted without the need to go to the library, albeit only a short distance away. Nevertheless, there was a feeling that the ease with which electronic periodicals can be scanned and searched could lead to them being tempted to spend too much time in the activity than was absolutely necessary.

Idowu and Mabawonku's (1999) study of information technology application in Nigerian university libraries showed that the electronic mail and CD-ROM are widely used by academic and researchers. Internet facilities have also been used extensively in library services. Salanje (1995) reported that as a result of the introduction of the use of CD-ROM databases, libraries have reported an increase in the use of journal collections,

interlibrary loans services and microfiche collection.

Methodology of Study

Two hundred copies of a questionnaire were distributed among the final year students and postgraduate students of the university. The choice of the final year students and postgraduate students was informed by the fact that the serials section that is in charge of both print and e-journals is being used by the final year students known to be carrying out their research, the postgraduate students and the faculty staff. The serials staffs were instructed to give the questionnaire to the users as they come into use the section. There were 142 (71%) responses all of which were found usable.

The questionnaire sought to find out the adequacy, relevance and currency of the journals in the library in relation to their area of study, how they got familiar with the use of electronic journals in the library and their choice of preference among the three databases: print, CD-ROM and On-line. Of the 142 respondents, 54 (38.028%) of them were postgraduate students while 88 (61.97%) were undergraduates in their final year from the seven colleges of the University.

Findings And Discussion

The result of the study shows that 92% (131) of the respondents visit the library regularly and 78% (110) of them are satisfied with the journal collections in their area of study.

From the table above, the analysis shows that majority of the respondents 92.9% indicated that they use journals for research for their thesis/ dissertation. This is not surprising because the section is restricted to only postgraduate students and the final year students as mentioned earlier.

Table 1: REASONS FOR USING JOURNALS

<i>S/N</i>	<i>REASONS</i>	<i>RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
1	To keep up in your field	36	25.35
2	To write assignments	67	47
3	For journal article writing	25	17.6
4	To do research for thesis / dissertation	132	92.9
5	For group research activities	48	33.8

Table2: FREQUENCY OF USE OF THE DATABASES

CD-ROM /On-Line databases	Once a week	Twice a week	Thrice a week	Four times a week	Five times a week	When necessary	Do not use at all
CAB ABSTRACT	12	---	---	---		32	98
TROPAG& RURAL	---	---	---	---	---	---	142
AGRICOLA							142
TEEAL	19 (13.38)	38, (26%)	42, (29.57%)	21, (14.78%)	05, (3.52%)	17 (11.97%)	3, (2.11%)
AGORA	14 (9.85%)	5 (3.52%)	--	--	---	46 (32.39%)	77 (54%)

Table III THE MOST PREFERRED MEDIUM

Medium	Number of respondents	Percentages
Print	43	30 %
On-line	08	5.63%
CD-ROM	91	64%

Frequency of use of Databases

Table 2 above shows that ‘the Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL)’ CD-ROM is used more than the other databases. Majority 62.67% of the respondents also found the TEEAL more useful than the other databases.

The respondents were asked to indicate which of the databases they use most often. This is shown in table 2 above : The data collected have been adopted and discussed below

Reason for using journals

The respondents were asked to indicate why they use the journals. Their responses were provide din table 1 above. It has also been discovered that while many of the respondents are not aware of the availability of some of the e-journals such as(CAB ABSTRACT, TROPAG& RURAL and AGRICOLA in the library, some expressed that the On-line database take much of their time when accessing them and than the CD-ROM databases. They complained about the password to be used for the on-line database (AGORA) without which it is difficult to get on the Internet. The above table III, shows that majority of the respondents preferred the CD-ROM to other databases followed by print journals.

User performance of journals

The respondents were requested to indicate which of medium of journal content presentation they preferred most. Their responses were presented in table 3 above On the problems they encounter when using the mediums, major of the respondents

complaint about their inability to borrow the print journals out of the library. That some of the journals are not current and sometimes not properly shelved. On the electronic journals, the respondents expressed their disappointment in the library over not having a standby generator when ever there is electricity failure the amount charged they are not comfortable with by the library for the printout of articles.

Concluding Remarks

Arising from the findings of the study it is suggested that adequate publicity should be given to the electronic journals in the library. The library should arrange for a demonstration on the use of the e-journals once or twice in a session, as lack of adequate knowledge of how to use the databases could also be an impediment to their usage. Printed journals should be well shelved properly for easy retrieval. The library should be given priority as one of the service area to be supplied with electricity by the university generator whenever there is load shedding on the generator alternatively, or a separate power generating plant should be acquired for the library.

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