Chapter 13
Attitudes of Librarians in Selected Nigerian Universities towards Digital Libraries in E-Learning

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ABSTRACT

The attitude of librarians in Nigerian university libraries has the potential to encourage or discourage digital libraries in e-learning. This paper addresses and discusses the attitudes of librarians towards digital library in e-learning, the imperativeness of training and knowledge for effective functionality of digital libraries in Nigerian universities. The paper uses the descriptive survey method to explore the attitudes of librarians towards digital libraries, advantages of digital libraries, and the types of e-learning that can be supported by digital libraries. It was discovered that training and knowledge are sine qua non of a positive attitude towards digital libraries in e-learning. And there was a high interest in the use of online information by researchers and learners but lack of awareness and how best to integrate e-learning resources into digital libraries pose a great challenge to the librarians in Nigerian universities.

INTRODUCTION

Integrating e-learning resources into digital libraries in Nigerian universities depends largely on librarians’ attitudes towards it. The application of ICT to library services has caused significant changes in Nigerian university libraries. Cooper (1998) opined that the advent of the internet, digitisation, e-learning resources and the ability to access library and research materials from remote locations created dramatic changes in the functionality of university libraries.

The term “digital library” according to Lynch is simply “an electronic information access system that offers users coherent view of an organised, selected and managed body of information”.

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Sharifabadi (2006) suggested the following working definition of the digital library:

*Digital libraries are organisations that provide the resources, including the specialised staff, to select, structure, offer intellectual access to, interpret, distribute, preserve the integrity of, and ensure the persistence over time of collections of digital works so that they are readily and economically available for use by a defined community or set of communities.*

Based on this working definition, Sharifabadi (2006) asserted that a digital library is not merely equivalent to a digitised collection with information management tools. It is also a series of activities that brings together collections, services, and people in support of the full life circle of creation, dissemination, use, and preservation of data, information and knowledge.

The booming of new learning methods built on an underlying foundation of computer and Information Technology (IT) over the past decades has offered various “solutions” to educational and training activities. Most of the early “solutions” were adaptations of text-based training delivered electronically. Today, the ‘solutions’ are more than duplicating non-electronic learning materials and transmitting them online – they are mainly embodied in the internet environment, containing variant elements, such as virtual learning environments, online mutual interaction, and managed learning environments. Among the numerous present applications of e-learning are online training, distance learning, learning with threaded discussions or interactive bulletin boards, website-based curriculum, courses that post assignments online, correspondence course-style read-and-test programmes, etc (McLester, 2001).

It is important to note here that not all professional librarians concur to these changes in educational methods and environment due to the concern of the possible dehumanisation of the learning process (Self, 1996) and the volatility of computers (Oppenheimer, 1997). However, many proponents argued that e-learning is able to offer more choices that suit learners’ flexibility, provide stimulus, reinforcement and instant feedbacks, foster interactions, and stimulate understanding and the recall of information. These claimed advantages have made e-learning very appealing. This technological change is posing a particular challenge to librarians in developing countries. Librarians in developed countries moved quickly to learn and adopt new information technologies (Ramzan, 2004). Digital library was introduced to perform library functions and provide innovative user services. Librarians gained knowledge of new technologies through continuing education programmes, professional training, and revisions to university curricula. University libraries in Nigeria, though not all, became equipped with appropriate hardware and software to enhance digitisation.

Ramzan (2004) has described the situation in Pakistan and other developing countries such as Nigeria. He declared that the librarians in developing countries are not readily prepared to embrace the changes introduced with the advent of Information Technology (IT). Most librarians are uncertain about digitisation of university libraries and the benefits for their organisations, especially when huge amount of money is involved and they are having little knowledge about digital librarian in e-learning. The problems associated with this lack of knowledge are also discussed by Khan (1995), and Mahmood (1999). This study will explore attitudes of librarians in Nigeria towards digitisation of university libraries. It is useful to have empirical evidence from a population of Nigerian librarians in this topical issue, which is important to the development of libraries at this knowledge era.

**Literature Review**

Attitudes represent the conceptual value of these technologies in the minds of the librarians, not
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