Chapter 16

ICT Readiness of Higher Institution Libraries in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This article surveys the Information Communication Technology (ICT) readiness of higher institution libraries in Delta State, Nigeria. By means of questionnaires and observation techniques, data were collected from the higher institution libraries. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data generated. Findings revealed the higher institution libraries ICT demographics, available ICT facilities and equipment, critical service areas automated in these libraries, as well as constraints to ICT use to include poor funding, inadequate skilled manpower, non reliability of electricity supply, inadequate technical support, and poor implementation of policies and lack of maintenance. The study concludes that higher institution libraries in Delta State, Nigeria, are yet to fully embrace ICT in library and information service delivery. Some recommendations that can facilitate the use of ICT in these libraries were also set forth.

INTRODUCTION

Information Communication Technology has been greatly described in several ways. According to Dewatteville and Gilbert (2000) ICT is the acquisition, analysis, manipulation, storage and distribution of information and the design and provision of equipment and software for these purposes. ICT encompasses array of networks, hardware and applications of communication and information creation, management, processing, storage and dissemination. The ICT sector is a gamut of industries and services—internet service provision, telecommunications equipment and services, information technology (IT) equipments...
ICT Readiness of Higher Institution Libraries in Nigeria

and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and
documentation centers, commercial information
providers, network-based information services
and other related information and communication
activities (Ajayi, 2003).

ICT is central to the development of contem-
porary society in all ramifications. That every
facet of human life is affected by ICT is no longer
in doubt – of which the library is not an excep-
tion. The use of ICT for library and information
service delivery has undergone various level of
development. Today the library mission of provid-
ing information service and access to information
resources is greatly enhanced by the use of ICT.
With ICT, these services are taking on new mean-
ings and constructs. Al-Qallaf (2006) summed
this up, when he stated that “librarians provide
access to eclectic e-collections, create and maintain
digital content, support e-learning, provide real
time e-reference, negotiate contracts and licensing
agreements and struggle with the economies of
electronic information”. With Internet protocols
as platforms, libraries are now virtual – available
anytime, anywhere, without brick and mortar
physical structure, but are able to inform educate,
create, store, and process data/information.

Akintunde (2004) succinctly captured this,
‘libraries worldwide since the last two decades
have undergone significant metamorphosis from
a purely traditional modeled manual service de-
livery system to a more dynamic technologically
driven system …. Like a cyclone the technology
environment has enveloped the library and is
taking it to unprecedented heights in knowledge
acquisition, management and communication’.

From the foregoing, the relevance and benefits
of ICT in higher institution’s libraries cannot be
over-emphasized. As new technologies emerge
all over the globe; the question that easily comes
to mind is; what are some of the technologies
available in Nigerian higher institutions’ librari-
ies? To what extent are libraries ICT driven?
What is the state of existing ICT facilities? What
are the factors enhancing ICT usage or imped-
ing ICT utilization? Research on these and other
related questions will help academic, policy mak-
ers, librarians, professionals and researchers in
planning and developing effective strategies for
implementation and utilization of ICT in library
and information services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A search of the literature dealing with state of ICT
facilities in higher institutions libraries revealed
several studies. Jones (1989) surveyed three univ-
ersity libraries in the United States. The result
showed that participating libraries have On-line
Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) with state of
the Art ICT facilities. A similar study involving
academic Libraries in Wisconsin by Palmine
(1994) showed that only cataloguing, acquisi-
tion, reference and circulation functions of the
participating libraries were automated.

On the African scene, Magara (2002) provided
a detailed report on the state of ICT in Ugandan
libraries. By means of a questionnaire, he sought
to find out the number of computers, level of
automation and types of software in use. The
results showed that although most participants
had computers and software packages for library
and information service delivery; responses indi-
cated a low level of ICT utilization. Isaac (2002)
examined the level of ICT implementation and
use in South Africa. He found that insufficient
funds, lack of infrastructure, high telephone and
internet cost are amongst the factors affecting
effective ICT implementation in Tertiary Institu-
tions. The Scenario in Botswana academic libraries
was greatly captured in Ojedokun and Owolabi
(2003). They reported the low level of Internet
access competence (18%) among teaching and
research staff of universities in Botswana. Their
study was aimed at determining the level of use
of Internet for teaching and research activities by
also studied ICT use in selected university librar-
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