



ISSN NO. 2320-5407

Journal homepage: <http://www.journalijar.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY(ICT) AND SKILLS OF STATE OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, POLYTECHNICS/MONOTECHNICS AND COLLEGES OF EDUCATION (OTHER TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN BENUE STATE

Nwachukwu, V.N. Ph.D¹, Asiegbu, F.N², Ogwo,Uzoamaka³

1. Department of Library and Information Science,University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

2. Nnamdi Azikiwe Library,University of Nigeria Nsukka

3. National Centre for Energy Research and Development,University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History:

Received: 12 March 2014

Final Accepted: 22 April 2014

Published Online: May 2014

Key words:

*Corresponding Author

Nwachukwu, V.N. Ph.D

Abstract

Information and communication technology has become an indispensable tool for effective information processing, storage and retrieval. Staff of academic institutions of all types are known for service provision to an elite clientele and require serious deployment of ICTs and great skills to increase efficiency in the way they serve the clientele. This study looks at the ICT skills of staff of university libraries and that of polytechnics/monotechnics and colleges of education in Benue State. The study identified the ICT facilities available in these institutions, compared the differences in ICT skills level between universities and other tertiary institutions in the state and variation in the training methods used by the staff of these institutions (universities and others) for the acquisition of the skills. The entire population of 248 library staff was surveyed with the use of a structural questionnaire by the researcher through the assistance of research assistants within the period of two weeks. Results indicate a very sharp difference in the ICT facilities available, the skills acquired as well as the training facilities used for the acquisition of the skill in favour of universities. While university libraries have a good number of the staff possess most of the skills listed, staff of polytechnics/monotechnics and colleges of education show a paucity of these facilities and skills. While the staff of university libraries enjoy library sponsorship for some ICT skills training in addition to personal efforts, staff of other institution libraries acquire their skills through self-sponsored efforts only. The study recommended the purchase of more ICT facilities and involvement in skills training by the authorities of polytechnics and colleges of education. Staff of these institutions are also expected to purchase basic ICT facilities on personal level and engage in training more among others.

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Introduction

Different types of libraries academic, public, special, school etc serve different categories of clientele. Among these, academic libraries in Nigeria seem to be the largest and have the greatest patronage. They are also characterised by well educated clientele ranging from the undergraduate students to lecturers among whom are research fellows, readers, professors and so on.

Academic libraries are all those libraries that are established and run by academic institutions like the universities and other tertiary institutions to support teaching, learning and research. According to Reitz (2005) an academic library is "an integral part of a college, university or other institution or post secondary education

administered to meet the information and research needs of its students, faculty and staff". Among them are college and university libraries. College libraries in the Nigerian system of education are established and managed by polytechnics/monotechnics, colleges of education and tertiary institutions.

As academic libraries, both college and university libraries have the mandate of providing materials for students' instruction, term papers, projects and supplementary reading; providing material for support faculty/school, external and collaborative research; providing standard works especially in professional disciplines; providing materials for self development; providing specialized information on region within which the institutions are situated among others (Fabunmi, 2004).

With increase in school enrolment and volume of information materials generated as well as users quest for faster and more effective services in with global trend of technology, academic libraries are being transformed from traditional storehouse of print materials into information centres where information and communication technologies are used to acquire, process, store and disseminate information.

According to Adetimirin (2009), ICT covers major developments and achievements in the adoption and use of ICTs in libraries which are mainly in academic and libraries. All the equipment and facilities that are used in the process of acquiring, processing and disseminating information for better service delivery to the academic community fall under the confines of ICTs. They include magnetic discs, tapes, optical discs (CD/DVD), flash (used for recording), radio, television (used for broadcasting) microphones, cameras, loudspeakers, telephone (for communicating) through voice and sound) and computing hardware including assorted computers, networked storage (wikipedia, 2009; Ayeh, 2008 and Anisi, 2005).

Though they have the capacity to facilitate easy access to information and provide more efficient information services to users and consequently improve overall performance of users (Adetimirin, 2009), the human factor which is the acquisition of skills to manipulate the facilities for desired results is needed. This calls for ICT skills from players in the information industrial- library staff.

Considering the educational level of their clientele, staff of academic libraries require a reasonable level of ICT skills to be able to meet their needs. Such skills according to Eastmond (2005), Ugwuanyi (2009) and Collier as cited in Nwabueze (2005) include use of computer application packages (eg. Microsoft Word, Excel and Access, as well as internet skills); use of presentation skills; production of webpage, construction of websites; ability to locate, access, store and transform electronic information resources and instructions across multiple applications and databases, networks and systems.

Presentation skills, collection development skills were also found to be important for digital projects and can best be acquired through formal training. These findings were made from a case study research by Ugwu and Ekere (2010) on training needs of librarians for digital projects in University Libraries in Nigeria, Nsukka as a case study. The study was set to find the skills required by librarians for: building and digital collections, presenting data collection to users and approaches for training librarians for digital library projects.

This paper will be anchored on the self-efficacy theory of Albert Bandura, a Canadian psychologist in 1977 (A Palachian State University, 2005). It states that, a person's judgment of his or her capabilities is based on mastery criteria and assessment of his or her ability to perform specific tasks in relation to goals and standards rather than in comparison with other capabilities (Wikipedia, 2010). It is an individual's belief in his belief in his ability to successfully perform a specific task. Computer self-efficacy has a general computing and specific tasks. Respectively, they refer to individual's belief to perform computer tasks across multiple computer domains and one's perception of ability to perform computer tasks within the domain of word processing, use of internet etc (Sote and Aramide, 2010). ICT-self efficacy focuses on what an individual believes he/she can accomplish with ICT resources.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to compare to information and communication technology (ICT) skills of staff of university libraries and that of polytechnics/Monotechnics and colleges of Education (other tertiary institutions) in Benue State. Specifically the study seeks to:

1. Identify the ICT facilities available in academic institutions in Benue State;
2. To find the differences in ICT skills between university library and library staff of other institutions;
3. To find out the training methods used for acquisition of ICT skills by staff of university libraries and other institutions.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design is used for this study. This is because it is one of the studies that involves a systematic and comprehensive collection of information about opinions, attitudes, feelings, and beliefs of behavior

of people through observation, interviewing, and questionnaire to a relatively large and representative sample of population of interest (Aina, 2002 in Camble and Musa, 2009). A census of about 248 library staff was reached for the study through a structured questionnaire. Institutions involved were University of Agriculture, Makurdi (Federal); Benue State University, Makurdi (State); University of Mkar, Gboko (Private); College of Education, Katsina-Ala and College of Education, Oju, Others were Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo; Fidei Polytechnic, Gboko and Akperan Orshi College of Agriculture, Yandev (a monotechnic). All the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education are state owned institutions.

248 copies of questionnaire were distributed across the institutions by the researcher with the aid of research assistant within a period of two weeks. A total of 195 were returned (134 from universities and 61 from polytechnics/colleges of Education). Frequencies, mean ($\bar{x}$) scores and ranking as well as percentages were used to answer the research questions.

Descussion

Findings from table 1 indicate that, all except 2 of the items (fax machine and digital cameras) were available in universities libraries in Benue State. This is in line with Anunobi (2005) who found that, majority of university libraries have computers, CD-ROM, Internet etc. For Polytechnics/Colleges of Education, all except 4 (computers, printers, photocopying machines and CD-ROM) were not available. This is collaborated by the findings of Edem (2007) that, computers/Internet was not exclusively used by librarians in some academic institutions and that the level of use was very low. This difference in ICT availability between universities and the other institutions can be attributed to better funding of universities over other institutions.

Table 2 shows results of ICT skills possessed by staff of academic institutions in Benue state. While staff of universities agrees having possessed all the skill at different levels scoring the mean of 2.87 and above, those of polytechnics/colleges of education do not have most of the skills. They can boast of possessing only skills of typesetting using Microsoft word and saving data typed in computer memory. Because utilization of ICT facilities is a function of skills level, this results can be linked to the findings of Abdullahi and Haruna (2008) that, ICT components (computers, CD-ROM, Internet and e-mail) are utilized at different levels for information services delivery. The situations of lack of basic ICT skills in polytechnics and colleges of education agree with Edem (2007) who studied computers usage in terms of computer experience and frequency of use and found that it was very low.

The apparent lack of most of the skills among staff of polytechnics and colleges of education may be attributed to poor funding, lack of ICT facilities or lack of training. Amkpa and Abba (2009) admit that funding, inadequate infrastructure and lack of training are key issues relating to non-implementation of ICTs in tertiary institutions.

It is also found that; staff of university libraries utilizes more training methods in the acquisition of ICT skills. Such methods include in-service training, in-house training and self sponsor to seminars and to computer/ICT centres. Thus, they enjoy both (institutional sponsorship and explore self sponsor opportunites). This collaborate Haruna (2008) that, universities do sponsor library staff for orientation/induction courses. They few skills acquired by library staff of polytechnics/colleges of education are done through self sponsor as they disagree with library sponsorship as a training method employed. Many of the staff or universities and polytechnics/colleges of education libraries challenge themselves of self-sponsor to acquire the skills. This agrees with Wombo and Abba as cited in Amkpa and Abba (2009) that, library staff should make personal efforts and not to wait for official sponsorship before embarking on ICT training.

Conclusion

The following recommendations emanate from the results of the study

- Library staff of polytechnics and colleges of education in Benue State should be made to make more efforts towards the acquisition of skills by increasing commitment to private learning.
- Library staff of polytechnics/monotechnics and colleges of education should make efforts to purchase personal computers and other ICT facilities like printers, scanners etc and devote time to practice how to use them so that, though constant usage, they will improve their skills.
- The institutions (management of polytechnics/colleges of education) should give more attention to the purchase of ICT facilities in libraries and staff training on ICT skills.

- The government should increase funding of the institutions (management of polytechnics/colleges of education) so that they will in turn give more attention to the libraries in terms of provision of ICT facilities and staff training.

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