7-27-2010

Impact of the Internet on Final Year Students' Research: A Case Study of Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria

Promise Ifeoma Ilo
Covenant University, Feomilo_2005@Yahoo.Com

Goodluck I. Ifijeh
Covenant University, ifijehgoodluck@yahoo.com

Impact of the Internet on Final Year Students' Research: A Case Study of Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria

Promise Ifeoma Ilo
Technical Services Librarian

Goodluck I Ifijeh
Serials Librarian

Centre for Learning Resources
Covenant University
Ota, Nigeria

Introduction

In this age of information and communication technology (ICT), the use of the Internet has become the norm. Developing countries like Nigeria are not exempted from this trend. The craving for the Internet stems from its central role in ICT with access to free online journals, magazines, and other information resources anytime and from anywhere for academic and research purposes (Kode and Kode, 2003).

Nigerian university undergraduates are required to carry out research projects in their final year in the university. Project writing is a major pre-requisite for the award of degrees in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Every student considers project writing important to his or her academic success. Research project writing involves a student or group of students carrying out a study on a topic of interest. When the project is completed, it is evaluated by the quality of the work submitted within the stipulated time (Fatoki,2004). It is used to indicate the student's ability to select, research, and draw logical conclusions from findings. The quality of the research project is to a large extent dependent on the quality, quantity, and recency of resources consulted and cited (Mbofung, 2003). The use of the Internet (if maximized) plays a major role in helping undergraduate researchers' access large number of materials from different parts of the globe.

In view of the above, this study evaluates the use of the Internet for research by undergraduate final year students of Covenant University.

A Brief History of Covenant University

Covenant University is a private Christian Institution situated in Canaanland, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. It was founded on October 21, 2002 by World Mission Agency, an arm of the Living Faith Church Worldwide.

The University has three colleges: Business and Social sciences, Human Development, and Science and Technology. As a cutting edge ICT-driven university, there is 24-hour Internet connectivity on campus. The university library, also known as the Centre for Learning Resources (CLR), has a media centre with forty computers connected to the Internet and escapist reading space provided with wireless Internet connectivity for use by undergraduate research students.

Objectives of the Study

- To determine the extent of accessibility and utilization of the Internet by final year students of Covenant University
- To identify the most frequently-used search engine by final year students
- To ascertain the impact of the Internet on the research work of final year students of Covenant University

Literature Review

According to Ani (2005), the Internet is a network of linked computers which are located at different points all over the world that provides easy communication between persons and organizations no matter where they are located. The Internet is used mostly in obtaining information. Nwafor and Ezejiofor (2004) quoting Sadler (1995) observe that the Internet is not a single network of computers but a network of nets, a large network that connects many smaller networks to one another. The major functional advantage of the Internet stems from its willingness to share information with others so that everyone might benefit. Shitta (2002) posits that the Internet is a communication super highway that links, hooks and focuses the entire world into a global village, where people of all races can easily get in touch, see, or speak to one another and exchange information from one point of the globe to another. It is the largest network in the world that allows computer users to communicate and access electronic databases with ease. Daramola (2004) maintains that an observable trend in the Internet is that more and more resources are moving to it and in some cases being made available only in the Internet.

Audu (2006) quoting Ojedekun (2001) reveal that the Internet has many benefits in the academic cycle as it provides a round the clock access to global sources of information. It also gives researchers the ability to discuss and share experience with colleagues. Oketunji (2001) identified areas in which Internet could be used to include education, agriculture, office automation, security, entertainment, politics, construction, banking, commerce, health, etc.

The Internet also has a role to play in the library, which is the hub of research activities in a university. Lancaster and Sandore (1997) outlined the roles of the Internet in the library thus:

an electronic resource that is now having the most significant impact on library services, operations and on the professional activities of librarians. This strength of impact is due to its multi-faceted nature since it simultaneously fulfils three important roles in library services, first, it is a resource that can be consulted and used like any other reference tool. Second, it is more dynamic and far – reaching than any other resource used in a library setting. Finally it provides a medium of communication that has extended the potential of librarians' interaction beyond the physical library to users, colleagues and other professional activities and relationships with library users.

The Internet is very useful in obtaining information for research. Adegboji and Toyo (2006) in their study on the impact of the Internet on research, reported that the Internet contributed significantly to the ease of research through downloading materials. It is commonly believed that researchers and students in Nigerian higher education institutions are battling the problem of inadequate and out-of-date materials. The only way to pursue knowledge is through research and the Internet is having a profound impact on the research process and dissemination of information (Kamja, 2008)

Luban (2000) carried out a research on the experiences of graduate students teaching undergraduates where they were to rate the Internet's effects on their students' academic work. He observed that the Internet had positive influence on the number of sources found and quality of the students' written work. He further noted that the drawback observed in the study is the indiscriminate use of the Internet. Students are lured by easy access and often do not question the value or quality of material. The Internet is a 'chaotic' library because it displays no discernible order, classification or

2

categorization. It therefore poses a challenge on the students' ability to distinguish between information from refereed scholarly journals available digitally and the digital equivalent of vanity press publications.

The use of the Internet is gradually becoming popular in Nigeria. Statistics show that Nigeria with an estimated population of 138,283,240 people has 10,000,000 Internet users, representing 7.2 percent of the population (Internet World Status, 2009)

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted in this study. The study population comprised 1,467 final year students for the 2008/2009 session of Covenant University. A systematic random sampling method was used. A total of 150 final year students were randomly selected from the three colleges in the university, namely: College of Science and Technology (50), College of Human Development (50) and College of Business and Social Sciences (50). The entire 150 samples responded, giving a response rate of 100 percent. This is because the questionnaires used were administered in the students' Lecture rooms where they were filled and returned immediately. A total of 48 (32 percent) respondents are males while 102 (68 percent) are females. There are more female respondents because of the large population of female students in the colleges of Human Development and Business and Social Sciences.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Use of the Internet

Use of Internet	Frequency	Percentage (percent)
Yes	150	100
No	-	0

The question analyzed on table 1 was intended to find out how many students used the Internet for their projects. The table shows that all the respondents, 150 (100 percent) used the Internet.

Table II: Preferred Location of Internet Use

Preferred Location for Internet use	Frequency	Percentage (percent)
Library Media Centre	79	52.7
Cybercafés on Campus	12	8
Campus Wireless Hotspots	21	14
Cybercafés outside campus	38	25.3
TOTAL	150	100

Though students have access to the Internet at different locations, the table shows that the largest number of final year students, 79 (52.7 percent) prefer to use the cybercafé in the media center of the university library. 38 respondents, represented by (25.3 percent) preferred to use the cybercafés outside the campus. While a total number of 21 students (14 percent) opine that their satisfaction comes from the campus wireless hot spots, the least number of respondents, 12 represented by (8 percent) simply find it comfortable using the campus cyber cafes.

Table III: Impact of the Internet on Students' Project

Response	Frequency	Percentage (percent)
Yes	141	94
No	9	6
TOTAL	150	100

On whether the Internet has any impact on their projects, the table shows the following response:

A m ajority of the students – 141 (94 percent) said the Internet had impact on their project work while 9 (6 percent) said the Internet did not have any impact on their work.

Table IV: Areas of most Impact

Areas of Impact	Frequency	Percentage (percent)
Improvement in quality of work	45	31.9
Economy of time	27	19.1
Speed in the writing of project	38	27.0
Recency of materials	31	22.0
TOTAL	141	100

The purpose of the question was to elicit the actual effect the use of the Internet had on students project work. This question was specifically answered by 141 students who agreed that the Internet has some impacts on their work. The highest number of respondents – 45 (31.9 percent) choose improvement in the quality of work as their option. This is understandable because the Internet exposes researchers to different works written by scholars all over the world. Reading and harnessing the ideas of different scholars from different parts of the globe cannot but improve output. On the effect of the Internet concerning the speed of writing of research work, 38 (27 percent) answered in the positive. Any researcher that has Internet search skills always stands the chance of accomplishing his task with speed. This is because the Internet provides great opportunities to resources needed in writing. As seen in the table, 27 respondents (19.1 percent) opined that the Internet helped them to economize time. The issue of time in relation to the Internet is two-edged. If one does not have the skills and lacks knowledge of the relevant search terms for specific work, one can waste hours without being able to get the relevant information. Users with the required skills for searching are able to navigate through the Internet and explore relevant information without necessarily investing on time. 31 respondents (22 percent) agreed that the Internet helped them to get recent materials for their work. Every researcher desires to know current trends in their areas of research. The Internet thus performs a big role in this regard. This confirms the observation of Ikpaahindi (2006) who maintains that the quest of the academia to explore different fields of study through research is satisfied by the vast sea of resources found in the Internet.

Table V: Resources with highest impact

Resources	Frequency	Percentage (percent)
Online journals	52	36.9
Online books	34	24.1
Lecture notes	14	9.9
Projects	16	11.3
Online newspapers/magazines	21	14.9
Non-journals articles	4	2.9
TOTAL	141	100

Online journals made the highest impact on final year students' research work as opined by 52 (36.9 percent) respondents. These journals carry information on latest developments in different fields of research. A total of 34 (24.1 percent) respondents asserted that online books were more impactful on their work. 21(14.9 percent) respondents were more excited using online newspapers/magazines; Online projects affected work of 16 (11.3 percent) respondents while 4 (2.9 percent).respondents indicated that non – journal articles made the highest impact on their work. 14 (9.9 percent) respondents said online lecture notes gave them the required satisfaction.

Table VI: Search Engines Used

Search Engine	Frequency	Percentage (percent)
Google	60	40
Yahoo	42	28
Mamma	8	5.3
Alta Vista	7	4.7
Dog Pile	6	4
Jstor	6	4
MSN	21	14
TOTAL	150	100

The table shows that most of the students used Google as their search engine as represented by 60 respondents (40 percent). The next search engine highly used by students is yahoo as represented by 42 respondents (28 percent) and MSN which was used by 21 respondents (14 percent). Other search engines were used minimally as indicated in the table.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The bedrock for national development is education and the importance of the Internet in our present day education cannot be overemphasized. Not only does the Internet have impact on the research work of final students of Covenant University, it does the same for other researchers both in other universities and other spheres of life. Yet, Igun (2006) observes that the Internet in developing countries like Nigeria is still in its infancy. Cybercafé managements should see the need to invest more funds, not only for opening such, but also for proper maintenance. A m ajority of our student populace who are computer literate have lap-top computers. If cybercafés are provided with wireless access points around their environs, it will become possible for users to browse within the environments and thus enhance access to information needed especially for research.

There is urgent need for development of ICT skills in our students and all Internet users at all levels. It behooves any user of computer and allied facilities to acquire skills needed to operate the computer so as to be able to navigate round to explore the avalanche of literature accessible through the Internet. Ours is no longer an age of information availability but that of accessibility. There is need for continuous training on ICT use and also training on the ability to formulate search terms for different research topics so as to control the quality and quantities of literature scattered on the Internet.

References

Adegboji, O.B., & Toyo, O.D. (2006). The impact of the Internet on research: The experience of Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice 8* (2): 1-8

Ani, O.E. (2005). Evolution of virtual libraries in Nigeria: A myth or reality? *Journal of Information Science 31* (1): 66 – 69

Audu, C. (2006). Internet availability and use by postgraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Global Review of Library & Information Science 2*: 34-43

Daramola, I.S. (2004). Knowledge and skills possessed by technical collage graduate of building technology trade in Taraba State. *Journal League of Researchers in Nigeria 4* (1)

Fatoki, O.C. (2004). Impact of library resources and the Internet on undergraduate students research, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. *Nigerian Libraries 38* (1):21-33 .

Igun, S.E. (2006). Use of Internet resources in a Nigerian university community. *Global Review of Library and information Science 2*: 21-32

Ikpaahindi, L.N. (2006). Resource sharing in cataloguing, bibliographic, and indexing services in an information and communication technology (ICT) age. Being a keynote address presented at the 26th annual seminar/workshop of the Nigerian Library Association, Cataloguing, Classification and indexing section, 29th October-3rd November

Internet World Status (2009). http://www.Internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ng .

Kamba, M.A. (2008). The changing role of resources in Nigeria: The Internet as an alternative future to modernity. *Library Philosophy and Practice*.

Kode, S., & Kode, A. (2003). Free online serials in the area of library and Information Science. *Annals of library and Information Studies 50* (4): 146 -152. Available: http://www.niscair.res.in/

Lubans, John (2000). Summary of graduate students view points about the effect of the Internet on students work. Available: http://www.indians.org/study5a.html

MacArthur Foundation (2005). Developing strong university libraries in Nigeria: A report. Available: http://www.library.illinois.edu/export/mortenson/activities/reports/MacArthur_Nigeria_2005_final.doc

Mbofong, U.I. (2003). Students' project write-up in the polytechnic: Issues arising. Part 1. *Nigeria Library and Information Science Review (NLISR) 18* (1 & 2):7-17

Nwafor, F.A., et al. (2004). Exploiting the potentials of the Internet in women's empowerment. *The Nigerian Library Link 11* (2).

6

"Impact of the Internet on Final Year Students' Research: A Case Study of Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria," Promise Ifeoma Ilo, Goodluck I Ifijeh. *Library Philosophy and Practice* **2010 (July)**

Oketunji, L. (2001). *Computer application to libraries*. Compendium of papers. presented at the 39th National Annual Conference and AGM of Nigerian Library Association held at Concord Hotel, Owerri from 17th -22nd June: 8-12.

Shitta, M.B.K. (2002). The impact of information technology on vocational and technology education for self reliance. *Journal of VOC & Tech. Education 1* (1) .