ACCESS AND USE OF SUBSCRIBED ONLINE DATABASES ON THE ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS, FEDERAL UNIVERSITY DUTSINMA KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the Access and Use of Subscribed Online Databases on the Academic Activities of Postgraduate Students of Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State. In order to achieve this, two research objectives were formulated. These are to find out the subscribed online databases available for the academic activities of postgraduate students in the Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State Library and also to determine the extent of access and utilization of the subscribed online databases by the postgraduate students of Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State. Quantitative research method and survey research design were adopted. The population was 742; this included 739 postgraduate students and three (3) library ICT staff. Two hundred and fifty-three (253) postgraduate students were sampled out and three (3) ICT staff were used. Data collected was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Findings show that four subscribed online databases were available for use; namely, ScienceDirect, Jstor, SpringerLink and EBCOhost databases. It was also discovered that challenges hindering postgraduate students from effective use of subscribed online databases were difficulty in retrieving accurate search results, online ads pop up and low internet bandwidth. It was concluded that the subscribed online databases available in the Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State library are relevant and influence the academic activities of postgraduate students. The researcher recommended, among others, that more specialized subscribed online databases need to be made available; Seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized to educate users on how subscribed online databases would influence their performance in examination; ICT staff of the library should ensure that every postgraduate student is acquainted with search strategy skills and general ICT competencies.

Keywords: Academic Activities, Access, Subscribed Online Databases, Postgraduate Students

Introduction

Academic libraries as an integral part of any higher institutions of learning have a significant impact on the academic activities of the students. This implies that the resources, both prints and non-prints have important role to play in the academic activities of these institutions. Thorpe, Lukes, Bever and He (2016) assert that several libraries have started to explore the connection between library use and student retention rates. Pagowsky and Hammond (2012) described programmatic approaches undertaken at two libraries to link library activities with institutional retention efforts. The rationale behind systematic integration into the curriculum

and outreach initiatives is that more meaningful library interactions may help increase student engagement, and student engagement may help boost retention rates.

Non-print resources of libraries are dominating the library services and consequently making more impact on students" academic activities than the print resources do. Ashikuzzaman (2016) asserts that the electronic resources are generally accepted because of the ease of use, readability, affordability and accessibility. Others include multi-access, Speed, Mobility, Savings physical Space, Convenience as well as Saving time and money.

The non-print resources are supposed to influence the academic activities of students more than the print resources. This is because Kenchakkanavar (2014) asserted that electronic resources are resources which require computer access or any electronic product that delivers a collection of data, be it referring to full-text bases, electronic journals, image collections, other multimedia products and numerical, graphical or time-based, as a commercially available title that has been published with an aim to being marketed. These may be delivered on CD ROM, on tape, via the Internet and so on. These e-resources include electronic journals

(e-journal), electronic books (e-book) online databases in varied digital formats, WebPages etc. Online database which is one type of electronic resource which is further subdivided into two: fee-based or what is referred to as online subscribed database and free online database. Ugwu and Onyegiri (2013) as cited in Anyim (2018) clearly gave examples of electronic resources which include, but are not limited to: web sites, online databases, e- journals, e-books, electronic integrating resources, and physical carriers in all formats, whether free or fee-based, required to support research in the subject covered, and maybe audio, visual, and/or text files.

Online database has been broadly defined by Naqvi (2012) as a large, regularly updated file of digitized information (bibliographic records, abstracts, full-text documents, directory entries, images, statistics,

etc.) related to a specific subject or field, consisting of records of uniform format organized for ease and speed of search and retrieval and managed with the aid of Database Management System (DBMS) software. It is further stated that the content is created by the database producer, which usually publishes a print version and leases the content to one or more database vendors that provide electronic access to the data after it has been converted to machine-readable form, usually on CD-ROM or online via the Internet, using proprietary search software.

The fee-based, usually referred to as subscribed online databases, as the name implies are those types that require payment for access. Examples are EBSCOhost, Proquest, Springer, ScienceDirect, Ajol, ResearchGate etc. These databases have advantages over the free-based ones. Ntakumba (2002) asserts that Fee-based databases usually offer a powerful search option, enabling users to focus their searches more precisely, and they provide access to information that is not available in the free information environment, mainly newspaper and journal articles. Due to the advantages that these databases offer and their richness, academic libraries budget and subscribe to these databases for students" access.

These databases, if properly utilized, is believed that the parent institution's fame, students" retention rate, the library's reputation and relevance would improve. The databases would also increase the quality and quantity of researches. In essence, the databases should have a greater influence on the students" academic activities. The influence will justify the huge number of resources been spent on the databases and can ultimately encourage the management of the institution to provide more resources in that course.

Statement of the problem

Academic libraries established in universities are designed and packaged in order to impact the entire undertaking of the institution it is serving in the areas of teaching, learning and research. Online subscribed databases are collections of scholarly articles, acquired and organized by a body which is accessible only by subscription and made available

via the internet to support the realization of the objectives. This information lists bibliographic references, abstracts and full-text documents, amongst others. Subscribed online database in this world of information explosion has been widely accepted and deployed in many libraries to serve in the conduct of teaching, learning and research. Universities subscribe to the databases to have a greater influence on the academic activities of the students. Its" importance in the promotion of teaching and learning cannot be overemphasized. It has been observed that the investment in these databases is high. For example, Ball (2008) asserts that University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) invested more than one million Malaysian Ringgit in 2013 to subscribe to only twenty-nine databases. Such high investment requires high accountability especially in the light of current government budgeting policy called Outcome-Based Budgeting (OBB). Thus, to justify the university investment in the online library databases, the outcome measure or effectiveness in the form of user satisfaction need to be measured.

Adam (2017) asserts that because collecting, organizing and developing database is not an easy work, most organizations charge huge amount for this service and equipped their database with authentication and authorization mechanisms to verify the identity and grant require access. It further stated that Kaduna State University subscribed to the following databases; Springer, Proquest, Ebrary, Science Direct, SCOPUS, HINARI, Jstor, Ebscohost, AGORA.

Similarly, Federal University Dutsinma has been spending huge amount of money for the subscription and management of these databases. A preliminary survey conducted by the researcher revealed that the use of the databases by the postgraduate students has not been measured as regards its" Access and Utilization on the academic activities of the students to justify the resources being spent. It is therefore deemed necessary to conduct research with the aim to ascertaining Access and Use of these databases on the academic activities of the postgraduate students.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the subscribed online databases available for academic activities of Postgraduate Students in the Federal University Dutsinma Library?

2. To what extent do the Postgraduate Students of the Federal University Dutsinma access and use the subscribed online databases?

Research Objectives
The following objectives guided the study:

1. Find out the subscribed online databases available for academic activities in Federal University Dutsinma Library.
2. Measure the extent to which postgraduate students of Federal University Dutsinma access and use the subscribed online databases.

Literature Review
The database is an organized collection of information regarding a particular entity which can be accessed and retrieved for use. The accessibility of these databases can be online or offline. That is, while some databases are hosted on a website which made them accessible via the internet others are stored on computers or attached storage facilities.

According to Verma (2016) online database search is simply bibliographic research which is performed by an individual scholar or librarian using a computer and the internet. By connecting with a database research service, millions of records from thousands of publications in hundreds of databases can be searched for material on a topic.

According to Edesiri (2018) online databases, also known as electronic databases, are a collection of electronic information sources by publishers from various fields and disciplines and can be accessed through a computer network. He added that these databases are usually updated files of digitized information, in which the content is revised usually on a regular basis to provide current information to users. It may contain indexes to and abstracts of

articles and/or links to the full-text articles. In almost similar view Khan and Haridasan (2015) as cited in Edesiri (2018) define online databases as records of related digital information concerned with either general information or any specific subject field, which is arranged in a uniform format to retrieve information easily through the internet or online networks. In the same vein, Samaravickrama and Samaradiwakara as cited in Gifty (2017), stressing on the importance and nature of these databases, opined that their impact on academic libraries and scholars is noteworthy and unprecedented. These databases are organized digital collections of references to published literature such as journal articles, newspaper articles, conference proceedings, reports, legal publications, theses, e-books among others. E-Databases are in different types such as bibliographic, full-text, directory, and multimedia. In agreement to the above, CSN College Library (n.d) assert that A database is an organized collection of electronic, digitized information that can be searched in a variety of ways. Databases typically include information from magazines, journals, newspapers, and electronic books. Since most of the information found in a database has previously appeared in print form, it has gone through the editorial process. In support Naqvi (2012) asserts that electronic database is a large, regularly updated file of digitized information (bibliographic records, abstracts, full-text documents, directory entries, images, statistics, etc.) related to a specific subject or field, consisting of records of uniform format organized for ease and speed of search and retrieval and managed with the aid of Database Management System (DBMS) software. Content is created by the database producer (i.e. Thomson Reuters), which usually publishes a print version (*Biological Abstracts*) and leases the content to one or more database vendors (EBSCO, OVID, etc.) that provide electronic access to the data after it has been converted to machine-readable form (*BIOSIS*), usually on CD-ROM or online via the Internet, using proprietary search software.Stewart, Narendra and Schmetzke (2014) suggest that general-subject databases that provide access to articles in magazines, newspapers

and journals – such as Ebscohost's Academic Search and MasterFILE, Wilson's OmniFile and Readers' Guide, and Proquest's Newspapers – have become the bread-and-butter of lower- level undergraduate research. Subject-specific online indexes, which have largely replaced their paper-based predecessors, are bibliographic tools essential for higher-level course work and faculty research.

From the foregone views of scholars, an online database can be specific or generalized. Both share a common feature of being one of the types of electronic resources accessible via the internet. The specific or specialized online databases are those databases that collect and organize resources in a non-print format such as e-journals, e-magazines, e-books accessible remotely that are specifically related to particular discipline or field of study. In contrast, the generalized online databases are those types that collect and organize information resources in electronic format such as e-journals, e-books, e-magazines for search remotely and try to include or cover all human endeavours.

Methodology

The research methodology adopted was quantitative research method. Also Survey research design was adopted for this study as it allows the researcher to get insight into the thoughts and opinions of the respondents under study. The population of this study comprised all the postgraduate students of Federal University Dutsinma Katsina State as well as the staff of the ICT Unit of Federal University Dutsinma, University Library. There are seven hundred and thirty-nine (739) postgraduate students in the University spread across the whole faculties running postgraduate programmes in the university and three ICT staff in the University Library. The sample size of this study was two hundred and fifty-three (253) respondents selected from the various faculties that run postgraduate studies as guided by Krejcie and Morgan table for determining sample size (1970) and all three (3) ICT staff of the library were included. The sampling technique employed for this study was stratified random sampling. An adapted questionnaire with a combination of both

open and close-ended Questions was used; and it was divided into seven (7) sections (A – G). Both face and content validity were conducted to determine the validity of the instrument. The researcher developed the instrument based on the research questions raised and distributed copies of the questionnaires to colleagues, members of staff, and researchers in and outside the Department of Library and Information Science for their observations and comments. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted at the Department of Library and Information Science Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria where ten (10) copies of the questionnaire was distributed personally by the researcher, completed by the respondents and retrieved. The retrieved and completed copies of the questionnaires were subjected to Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for analysis, and Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used in order to obtain the reliability index. 0.884 coefficient value was obtained. This denotes that the instrument is reliable and can be used for the research work.

Results and Discussion of Findings

RQ1: What are the subscribed online databases available for academic activities of Postgraduate Students in the Federal University Dutsinma Library?

The researcher seeks to find out the subscribed online databases available for academic activities of Postgraduate Students in the Federal University Dutsinma Library. Responses collected were analyzed and presented in Table 1.1

Table 1.1: Online Subscribed Databases Available for Academic Activities of Postgraduate Students of Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State.

S/No	Online Subscribed Databases	F	Percentage
I	Academic search complete		
III	EBSCOhost databases	3	100
V	EBSCOhost mobile		
VI	JSTOR	3	100
VII	ProQuest Biology Journals		
VIII	ProQuest Central		
IX	ProQuest Criminal Justice		
X	ProQuest Education Journals		
XI	Proquest Nursing and Allied Health Sources		
XII	Econlit Economics		
XIII	Scopus		
XIV	EMBASE		
XV	SpringerLink	3	100
XVI	HINARI		
XVII	AGORA		
XVIII	ScienceDirect	3	100

Table 1.1 showed the online subscribed databases available in Federal University Dutsinma, University Library. As indicated in the table, all the three ICT staff of the library indicated that, four subscribed online databases including EBSCOhost databases, Jstor, ScienceDirect and SpringerLink were available in the Library. This shows that subscribed online are available for use in Federal University Dutsinma,

University Library. This is in line with Manjack, Umar and Fari (2019) who assert that there are available online databases such as ScienceDirect and JSTOR. Some of these databases are specialized while others are multidisciplinary. SpringerLink and ScienceDirect are specialized. Elsevier (2021) declared that ScienceDirect is a specialized online database which supports teaching, learning, research and discovery containing scholarly journals on Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth and Planetary Sciences, Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy with over 1.4 million open access articles. This shows that ScienceDirect is appropriate for subscription.

The available databases namely; ScienceDirect, Jstor, EBCOhost and SpringerLink as said earlier, are either multidisciplinary (eg Jstor and EBCOhost) or specialised (ScienceDirect and SpringerLink which are science oriented). This implies that there is imbalance in the provision of subscribed online databases for postgraduate students in Federal University Dutsinma, University Library, because there are many courses being offered which need to also be considered.

RQ2: To what extent do the Postgraduate Students of the Federal University Dutsinma access and use the subscribed online databases?

The researcher seeks to determine the extent of access and use of subscribed online databases for academic activities of Postgraduate Students in the Federal University Dutsinma Library. Responses collected were analyzed and presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Extent to which the Postgraduate Students of Federal University Dutsinma Access and Use Subscribed Online Databases

S/No	Academic Activities	SA		A		DA		SD		UD		TOTAL	Mean	SD
		Freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	Freq	%			
I	I use subscribed online databases for assignment	49	23	44	20	13	6	1	0	108	50	215	2.65	0.85
II	I use subscribed online databases for examination preparation	30	14	24	11	54	25	100	47	6	3	214	2.87	0.07
III	I use subscribed online database for preparing conference paper	36	17	142	66	14	7	4	2	10	5	206	3.92	0.18
IV	I use subscribed online database to update knowledge	42	20	44	20	88	41	38	18	2	1	214	3.40	0.19
V	I use subscribed online database for seminars and workshops	36	17	135	63	22	10	12	6	10	5	215	3.81	0.05

VI	I use subscribed online database for writing dissertation	128	60	40	19	20	9	8	4	16	7	212	4.21	0.08
VII	I use subscribed online database for writing thesis	36	17	134	62	10	5	16	7	18	8	214	3.72	0.11
VIII	I use subscribed online database for getting general information	58	27	52	24	56	26	38	18	10	5	214	3.51	0.02

Key: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree; DA = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree; UD = Undecided

Table 1.2 presents the extent to which postgraduate students access and use online subscribed databases for their academic activities. Eight academic activities were listed on five Likert Scale (Strongly Agree: SA, Agree A., Disagree: DA., Strongly Disagree SD., and Undecided UD). The table indicated that use of online subscribed databases for writing dissertation and preparing conference papers with mean score 4.21 and 3.92 respectively have the highest use which is above the benchmark. Use of online subscribed databases for assignment writing and examination preparation have least mean of 2.65 and 2.87 respectively which is below the benchmark and this indicates less usage. Harazeem, Mshelia and Bello (2016) assert that users of Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri have low awareness and face difficulty in accessing databases, leading to a low extent of utilization of the subscribed database. This goes contrary to the outcome of this research, which indicated the databases are hugely use for most of the academic activities except in writing assignments and examination preparations. This is supported by Tiemo (2017), who declared that in libraries of universities of South- South-South region, Nigeria users do not use online subscribed databases for preparing for examinations and writing of assignments.

Based on the above outcome, some important academic activities are missed out in using the available online subscribed databases – assignment and examination preparation and this implies underutilization in these important academic activities.

Conclusion

From the analysis and findings of this study, the conclusion drawn is that there are subscribed online databases available for use by postgraduate students of Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State, though more need to be subscribed to. All the databases were found to be useful and relevant to the academic activities of postgraduate students in Federal University Dutsinma.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been provided based on the findings of the research:

1. Since many courses are being offered in Federal University Dutsinma Katsina State, it is recommended that more online subscribed databases, both multidisciplinary and specialized should be subscribed to, to add to the four existing databases. This would cater for the needs of other departments that offer non-science courses.

2. The Federal University Dutsinma, University Library should organize such programmes as user education, library orientation, workshops and seminars to showcase the importance of subscribed online databases and how access and utilization of these subscribed databases could help in postgraduate students' assignments and

examinations, thereby increasing the students' retention rate.

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