Availability, Awareness and Utilisation of Offline e-book Platforms and Other Online Databases in University Libraries

Joseph Chukwusa
Delta State University Library, Abraka.
Email: *chukwusajoseph@yahoo.com*

Edith Ijeoma Oshiokpu
University of Science and Technology, Ozoro
Email: *ijeomaoshiokpuedith@gmail.com*

Abstract

This study was carried out to examine availability, awareness and utilization of offline e-book platforms and other online databases in Delta State University and Federal University of Petroleum Resources libraries. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the research. Purposive sampling technique was adopted. The researcher purposively visited the libraries studied and randomly selected 70 students each from the two universities. This brings the population of the study to 140 students; and all were administered the questionnaire which was retrieved and found usable. The data collected were analyzed using percentage and descriptive mean statistical tools. The study revealed that most of the students don't know that there are dedicated offline e-book platforms available in the e-libraries; but availability of other online resources is not in doubt; that most of the students are not aware of e-book platforms in the e-libraries as a result not utilizing them; but are aware of other online resources and making effective use of them amongst other challenges. The major challenges limiting the utilization of databases by students are lack of awareness, inadequate facilities, epileptic power supply and poor internet services. The study recommended strong awareness campaign concerning the availability of offline e-book platforms, and subscription and open access databases by librarians in the study area.

Keywords: *Awareness Campaign, Online Databases, Offline e-book, Platform utilization, Students*, *University Libraries.*

Introduction

Libraries are essential to people's personal growth in our culture. Academic accomplishment and research quality in higher education institutions are determined by the quality of print and electronic library resources. Acquiring, processing, storing, preserving, and making current and pertinent print and electronic items that will satisfy their users' needs at the right moment are the goals of library establishment. Information has become much more available and accessible as a result of digitization, according to Ubogu and Chukwusa (2022) and Pertti and Sanna (2006). The increasing amount of literature available in digital format in libraries makes it easier for academics to find the information they need. The scholars' exposure to a greater variety of literature than they otherwise would have had is a direct result of this growth. Electronic information is accessible to researchers via a range of technological means. While the internet offers a wealth of information through search engines, subject gateways, subject directories, and other web-based resources, these also include CD-ROMs, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), e-journals, and other digital media. According to Curzon (2010), the goal of a successful library should be to promote teaching, learning, and research. The extensive and varied library collections should aid in this way.

According to Hamza, Ahmad, Yunusa, and Hamisu (2015), the benefits of electronic databases are driving up their popularity over traditional print resources. These databases are

well-structured digital compilations of citations for published materials, including theses, journal articles, conference proceedings, reports, and legal publications. There are several varieties of academic online databases, including full-text, multimedia, directory, and bibliographic databases. They have had a remarkable and unparalleled impact on academic libraries and researchers (Chukwusa, 2020). These databases have several benefits over print, some of which are: greater collection expansion potential; substantial information capacity; powerful sharing capabilities; and reduced storage requirements.

The university under investigation has subscribed to a variety of electronic resources, some of which are free and others of which require payment, in light of their above-mentioned contributions to the academic world. It is envisaged that resources like databases, in which the university has made significant financial investments, will be fully utilized. In light of this, the purpose of this study is to find out how well-informed and how often students use the offline e-books and other online databases available in the library of Delta State University.

Statement of the Problem

Both offline and online databases are priceless information resources that can significantly improve research, teaching, and learning in academic institutions across the globe. The University Library's ICT infrastructure was purchased with monies contributed by the Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun and Delta State University Management. To facilitate quick and simple access to up-to-date material for academic study, the university library websites features links to several open access databases, an offline e-book platform, and a subscription to Research4life, an online database. However, it is noted that students use databases less frequently than one might think for academic work because many of them rely on search engines, a small number of outdated textbooks, and other printed materials. Maybe there are things that prevent it from being used effectively. It appears that among other issues, students at the university libraries under study struggle with poor ICT abilities, a lack of knowledge about the existence and advantages of offline e-book platforms and online databases, and inadequate infrastructure. In light of this, the study aims to explore the availability, awareness, and usage of offline and online databases by students in the universities under investigation, with the goal of creating plans to improve their efficient use.

Objectives of the Study

This article aims to investigate the availability, student awareness, and utilization of offline e-book platform databases and online databases at the libraries of Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University.
The particular goals are to:
1. Check if the libraries at Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University have offline e-book platforms and online databases.
2. Find out how much knowledge students of the libraries at Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University have about offline e-books and online databases.
3. Analyze how much students use the offline e-books platforms and online databases in the libraries at Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University.
4. Determine the obstacles preventing students from using offline e-book platforms and other online databases effectively in the libraries at Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University.

5. Determine the methods for improving student users' efficient usage of offline e-books platforms and other online databases at Delta State University and Federal University of Petroleum Resources libraries.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. Are online databases and offline e-book platforms available for students in Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University libraries?

2. How well-informed are the students at Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University with regard to online databases and offline e-book platforms in the libraries?

3. To what degree do students at Delta State University and Federal University of Petroleum Resources libraries utilize online databases and offline e-book platforms?

4. What obstacles prevent students from using the offline e-book platforms and other online databases at Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University libraries effectively?

5. How can students at Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University libraries make better use of offline e-book platforms and internet databases?

Literature Review

A university library's quality can be assessed by looking at its current holdings and how well it serves its users online and in other ways. Hiremath, Kenchakkanavar, and Shirur (2023) contend that effective client services and a resourceful library are essential for the growth of high-quality education. Meeting the information needs of the academic community is the aim of a university library. Because of this, a lot of university libraries are actively working to create collections made up of books, journals, serials, theses, and other materials that have been digitally transformed or are otherwise "born digital" and are accessible online through databases (Joshi, 2021; Ubogu, 2020). The researcher went on to say that one of the most significant electronic resources that university libraries currently subscribe to in order to support efficient teaching, learning, and research is online academic databases. Sani, Nwakaego, and Ninma (2020) concurred that internet databases are now a standard part of the holdings of many university libraries. Journal articles or citations to them, e-books (both offline and online), reference materials, conference papers, reports, and other materials are frequently found in these databases. These databases come in a variety of forms, including numeric, multimedia, full-text, directory, and bibliographic. According to Sani, Nwakaego, and Ninma (2020), there are regional and situational differences in the awareness and use of online databases.

According to Okogwu (2020), students in developed nations are more familiar with and use electronic databases than students in developing nations due to the former's access to sophisticated ICT infrastructure and the latter's continued struggle with inadequate ICT infrastructure and high costs associated with such resources. Francis (2023) underlined once more that students typically turn to general search engines to get the information they need when they are unaware that online databases exist.

Empirical research

Onekutu et al. (2020) reported Zhang, Ye, and Liu (20II) in their study revealed that most university students in China use online databases more than other electronic resources for research purposes. Furthermore, they noted that approximately ninety-nine percent of students in Columbia use electronic information resources for their research work, citing Eqbal and Khan (2007). They also noted that users prefer to use online resources because of their speed and ease of accessibility.

Additional research by Hong and Jo (2017) on how American undergraduate students studying international geography utilize the internet has demonstrated that students prefer to use online resources often and only use them for their academic assignments. According to Aina (2014), users in Nigeria who are aware of electronic resources are more likely to be aware of the online databases that their institution subscribes to. It is recommended that library customers make use of the resources when needed; when they are adequately informed about them. According to Basiru and Oshiotse (2018) and Chukwusa (2019), using and being aware of internet databases is crucial for research, teaching, and learning in the Nigerian university system. They also underlined that the primary obstacle to the efficient usage of electronic databases is ignorance.

According to a study by Baro, Endouware, and Ubogu (2011), respondents to their survey about medical students' awareness and use of online information resources at Delta State University in Nigeria were more aware of online databases than they were of their usage. Only 17% of medical students used the Medline database, despite 23.2% of them being aware of its existence, according to their survey. Moreover, just 38.8% of respondents utilized HINARI, despite the fact that 60.8% of them were aware of it.

Challenges

Despite the importance of online databases and making sure that library patrons can access them, research has shown that there are a number of obstacles that prevent users from using online databases. These obstacles include a lack of awareness, a preference for alternative sources over online databases, a lack of search expertise, inadequate lCT infrastructure, slow download speeds, and users' general attitudes (Chukwusa, 2021; Chukwusa, 2017; Mangi, 2014). In addition, Ugwu and Orsu (2017) and Chima-James, Okpara, and Ogaraku (2018) identified a number of factors, including inadequate information technology infrastructure development, a lack of awareness and time, a delay in downloads, difficulty finding information, insufficient or nonexistent search skills, high access costs, challenges navigating databases, a lack of bandwidth, and frequent power outages.

The literature reviewed for this study covers a wide range of topics, the value of online and offline e-book databases as information resources and how they have established themselves as a mainstay of many university libraries, the exposure of students to online databases, the level of awareness and utilization of online databases in Nigeria, and the obstacles that prevent students from using them. The study aims to close the knowledge gap on the, availability, use and awareness of online databases and offline e-book databases in the Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University libraries; as no research has been done in this area as it specifically concerns offline e-book platforms.

Methodology

This study was carried out to examine availability, awareness and utilization of offline e-book platforms and other online databases in Delta State University and Federal University of Petroleum Resources libraries. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the research. Purposive sampling technique was adopted. The researcher purposively visited the libraries studied and randomly selected 70 students each from the two universities. This brings the population of the study to 140 students; and all were administered the questionnaire which was retrieved but 135 (96.4%) was found usable. The data collected were analyzed using percentage and descriptive mean statistical tools.

Research Analysis/Findings

Table 1: Availability of Dedicated offline E-book Platforms and Other Online Resources in FUPRE and DELSU E-Libraries

AVAILABILITY OF OFFLINE E-BOOK PLATFORMS			
Variable	**Options**	**No. of Respondents**	**%**
	Agree	39	28.9
Availability of offline e-book platforms	Undecided	4	3.0
	Disagree	92	68.1
Grand Total		**135**	
AVAILABILITY OF OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES			
Variable	**Options**	**No. of Respondents**	**%**
	Agree	135	100
Availability of other online e-resources	Undecided	-	-
	Disagree	-	-
Grand Total		**135**	**100**

On availability of dedicated offline e-book platforms and other online resources in FUPRE and DELSU e-Libraries, Table 1 revealed that 39 (28.9%) of the respondents agreed that there are e-book platforms in the two universities studied, while 92(68.1%) disagreed. The study concluded that most of the students don't know that there are e-book platforms in the e-libraries. As per availability of other online resources, the respondents 135(100%) affirmed that there are some subscription and open access databases in the libraries.

Table 2: Awareness of Dedicated Offline E-book Platforms and other Online Resources in FUPRE and DELSU E-Libraries

AWARENESS OF OFFLINE E-BOOK PLATFORMS			
Variable	**Options**	**No. of Respondents**	**%**

	Agree	42	31.1
Awareness of offline e-book platforms in the libraries	Undecided	-	-
	Disagree	93	68.9
Grand Total		**135**	**100**

AWARENESS OF OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES			
Variable	**Options**	**No. of Respondents**	**%**
	Agree	133	98.5
Awareness of other online e-resources in the libraries	Undecided	2	1.5
	Disagree	-	-
Grand Total		**135**	**100**

On awareness of dedicated offline e-book platforms and other online resources in FUPRE and DELSU e-Libraries, Table 2 revealed that 42 (31.1%) of the respondents agreed that they are aware of the existence of offline e-book platforms, while 93(68.9%) disagreed. On awareness of other online resources, 133 (98.5%) respondents agreed that they aware; but with 2(1.5%) undecided cases. The study concluded that most of the students are not aware that there are e-book platforms in the e-libraries, but are aware of other online resources.

Table 3: Utilization of Dedicated Offline E-book Platforms and Other Online Resources in FUPRE AND DELSU Libraries

UTILIZATION OF E-BOOK PLATFORMS			
Variable	**Options**	**No. of Respondents**	**%**
	Agree	52	38.5
Utilization of e-book Platform	Undecided	-	-
	Disagree	87	64.4
Grand Total		**135**	**100**

UTILIZATION OF OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES			
Variable	**Options**	**No. of Respondents**	**%**
	Agree	135	100
Utilization of other online e-resources	Undecided	-	-

	Disagree	-	-
Grand Total		**135**	**100**

Table 3 revealed that 52(38.5%) of the respondents agreed to using offline e-book platforms in their study, while 87(64.4%) disagreed. As per utilization of other online resources, the study revealed further that all the 135(100%) respondents affirmed to using online resources. The study concluded that most of the respondents are not using dedicated offline e-book platforms in the two university libraries studied but are using online resources to a large extent.

Table 4: Challenges to the Use of Dedicated Offline E-book Platform and Other E-resources

S/N	Challenges to e-resources use	Agree	Und	Disagree	Total	Mean Scores
1.	Insufficient awareness of the existence of offline e-book platforms in the e-library.	102	6	27	135	2.6
2.	Having flair for other general search engines	68	-	67	135	2.0
3.	Inadequate search skills when using the computer	126	-	9	135	2.9
4.	Insufficient ICT facilities/bandwidth	97	-	38	135	2.4
5.	Unfriendly attitude of librarians in the e-library	49	-	86	135	1.7
6.	Inadequate power supply	43	-	92	135	1.6
	Grand Mean					**2.2**

With 2.0 as cutoff point, Table 4 revealed that aside 'Unfriendly attitude of librarians in the e-library, 1.7' and 'Inadequate power supply, 1.6' mean scores the study revealed that the challenges to the use of dedicated offline e-book platforms and other e-resources in the libraries studied are 'Inadequate search skills when using the computer, 2.9' and 'Insufficient awareness of the existence of offline e-book platforms in the e-libraries, 2.6 mean scores' amongst others.

Table 4: Strategies for enhancing the use of offline e-book platform and other e-resources

S/N	Strategies to enhance e-resources use	Agree	Und	Disagree	Total	Mean Scores
1.	Constant user education/awareness programmes for students.	125	6	4	135	2.9
2.	The involvement of students in academic activities which will make them have the need to use offline e-books and other databases.	90	14	31	135	2.4
3.	Adequate internet connectivity	135	-	-	135	3.0
4.	Constant training on information search approaches/literacy skills	109	-	26	135	2.6
5.	Provision of constant power supply	135	-	-	135	3.0
6.	Digital Librarians to put up more positive attitudes that will motivate students to use the e-book platforms and other e-resources provided for them	132	3	-	135	2.9
	Grand Mean					**2.8**

On strategies to employ to enable enhancing the use by students of offline e-book platforms and other e-resources in the two libraries studied, Table 5 revealed that all the six items listed were affirmed as challenges. Adequate power supply and internet connectivity had 3.0 as mean scores each. The least item in the table (though accepted), 'the involvement of students in academic activities which will make them have the need to use offline e-books and other databases' was accepted.

Discussion of Findings

According to the study, the majority of students are unaware that e-libraries offer specialized offline e-book platforms; but availability of other online resources is not in doubt. Ugwu and Orsu (2017) corroborated this conclusion, stating that both offline and online e-resources are available in university libraries studied, despite the offline e-book platforms being hardly utilized.

The results of this study showed that students are only aware of a small number of subscription and open access databases among the many databases and offline e-book platforms available in the libraries under review. The majority of students are unaware that there are specialized offline e-book sites. This implies that students do not have a high level of database awareness. This is consistent with research by Onekutu et al. (2020), who found that students are typically not exposed to the resources (awareness) and subsequent use, which leads to low levels of awareness of offline e-book platforms. The authors went on to

say that the students only utilize subscription and open access databases and use less offline e-book platforms since they are not aware of their presence.

According to the study, the main obstacles preventing students from using databases (both online and offline) effectively were a lack of knowledge about offline e-book platforms available in libraries, inadequate infrastructure, poor internet connectivity, an epileptic power supply, and a preference for other sources like subscription and open access databases. The results of the study are consistent with Chukwusa (2017) and Chukwusa (2020).

Having a proper database awareness program, having a sufficient power supply and infrastructure, getting students actively involved in academic activities that will encourage them to use the database, and subscribing to databases that are pertinent to the students' field of study are some strategies to overcome obstacles. This is consistent with research by Onetuku et al. (2020), Ugwu and Orsu (2017), and Chime-James et al. (2018), which found that the main obstacles to the use of electronic databases in libraries are low internet connectivity, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate power supplies, and lack of awareness. To overcome these obstacles, library staff members must work extremely hard to raise community awareness and make sure that the facilities and infrastructure needed are in place to support students' efficient use of electronic resources.

Conclusion

The results made it clear that the majority of students do not have sufficient knowledge of most databases, particularly the offline e-book platforms found in university e-libraries. The use of databases by students is hindered by issues such as inadequate facilities, unstable power supplies, and subpar internet access. The study found that students using the libraries at Federal University of Petroleum Resources and Delta State University had little knowledge of internet databases, particularly offline e-book platforms. This has played a significant role in the underutilization of subscription and open access databases, as well as offline e-book platforms, which are highly pertinent to the fields of study of the students enrolled in these institutions.

Recommendations

The study's conclusions led to the following recommendations being made:

• Libraries should have enough offline e-book platforms and subscription databases available (to at least make it easier for students to utilize the e-library in the event of a power outage).

• The university library should work with departments and teaching faculties to increase knowledge of the availability of offline e-book platforms and online databases. User education must be ongoing.

• To raise awareness, the university library should create a list of the databases it has and provide it to students via email and the library website, both in print and electronic copies. This list should be updated on a regular basis.

• In order to improve database usage, the library should offer students effective training resources and ongoing instruction in advanced searching techniques.

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