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Awareness and Computer Competency in Integrated Library Management System Utilization for Learning and Research among Undergraduates in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

Integrated library management system (ILMS) is often deployed among academic libraries for effective management of library operation and users' information service satisfaction. Contemporary library users always want prompt response to their information needs, to satisfy this users information curiosities, integrated library management system is a good tool in this regard. However, its availability and deployment in library does not translate to utilization as a result of certain factors. High level of awareness approach among users and computer competency could foster or facilitate continuous utilization of ILMS. Therefore, this paper is a conceptual research, it primary objective is on ILMS utilization among Nigerian undergraduate students in considerations of their awareness and users' computer competency. It adopts study and systematic literature review approach to establish related publications on the subject matter under discussion. Critical literature review was carried out, where data were gathered from relevant local/national and international journals, conference papers/proceedings, as well as textbooks and online information resources. Research findings revealed that awareness about the software (ILMS) and its use can be made through library instructions, orientation or library exhibition. Hence, it is concluded that these approaches would improve frequency of use among library users. Therefore, the study recommends that Nigerian undergraduate students should possess basic knowledge in computer operation and application, knowledge of module of operation in ILMS, knowledge

of online searching strategies have been also found to be helpful in the utilization of ILMS. In addition it is recommended that proper orientation or instruction mechanism on the use of the ILMS should be facilitated by library managements in order positively affects maximum ILMS utilization.

Keywords: Awareness, Computer Competencies, Integrated Library Management System, Undergraduates, Utilization, Academic Library.

Introduction

To remain relevant in the 21st century, academic libraries need to meet up with their mandates of information service provision to users, by fundamentally embracing information and communication technology (ICT), a technology that enhances data and information transfer among people, organizations, national and international communities etc. for effective and efficient information service delivery. In the submission of Ojedokun (2007), rapid developments in ICTs are offering new potential for producing and distributing knowledge, as these technologies have fundamentally transformed the world into global community. Innovation in informatics and telecommunication are revolutionizing capacity to store, transmit, access and use information; because they allowed tertiary institutions to build international visibility. Virtually every aspect of scholarship i.e from conducting research to communicating ideas has been influenced by these technologies. Amusa & Oluwade, (2020) stated that ICT is essential in our daily life activities, especially the services provided by new generation of mobile communications systems. The cell phone (mobile phone/handset) has become an integral part of the modern world; it provides human connectivity easily in a means that was never possible before. Android based mobile phones are also used to access, retrieve and even serve as storage device for various information resources, in e-book, journal or reference sources etc.

As a result of information explosion and the advances in technologies, contemporary library users demand seamless access and utilization of information resources for learning and research. Therefore, many academic libraries across Nigerian universities especially, are adopting integrated library management system – encompassing software that is used to manage library operations for adequate and prompt service delivery to clients. It carries a considerable potential for enhancing information searching that reshape learning functions. Uzomba, Oyebola and Izuchukwu, (2015) stated that integrated library management system is an

enterprise resource planning system for a library. It is used to track items owned, orders made, bills paid, and patrons who have borrowed library materials. It usually comprises a relational database and two graphical user interfaces (one for library user, one for staff). This is actually moving from manual operations into integrated system and network operations. It separates functions into discrete programs called modules, to include; acquisition module: (manage fund allocation, order, vendors record and purchase of library materials), cataloguing module: (manage cataloguing functions, copy cataloguing, import and export record and search for record in online public access catalogue), circulation module: (performs checkouts, check-ins, renewal and request (reservation) and serials control module: (for journal and periodical holdings) etc.

Awareness and user computer competency could be of essence in the access and utilization of ILMS among students. For it is in view of the above that this study investigated utilization of integrated library management system, particularly for learning and research activities with emphasis on computer competencies and awareness. The gap in the existing literature is that the integrated library management system deployments among academic libraries are not yielding expected result in terms maximum utilization. According to Abbasi, (2011) significant investment in information technology in our everyday life is been made in library projects, where its importance is indisputable in the universities. However, the efforts to apply new information technology innovations in library projects are still being reported as failures. Researchers of information system structures and acceptance greatly emphasized the need to understand individuals' inherent perceptual behaviour, which might appear differently across IT project users. Availability of ILMS in an academic library does not translate to automatic utilization among the users. Hence, utilization of ILMS demands user's technical know-how or basic skills in computer operations, training, awareness etc. Therefore, the research intended to find out what are the factors that could actually lead to this experience.

Research Objective

The broader objective of this research work is to study awareness and computer competency in integrated library management system utilization for learning and research among undergraduates in Nigerian universities. The research's specific objectives are as stated thus:

1. To determine students' awareness in the utilization of integrated library management system for learning and research in Nigerian universities.
2. To identify students' computer competencies in the utilization of integrated library management system for learning and research in Nigerian universities.

Review of Literature

Before the advent of computers, library tasks were done conventionally/manually. Library users borrowed books using ordering slips, librarians catalogued items; and indexed them with the card catalogue system. This claim was supported by Uzomba, Oyebola, and Izuchukwu (2015), who opined that the importance of integrated system in library activities such as cataloguing, circulation, acquisitions and serials management, etc. is no longer debatable as libraries all over the world have realized the need to move from their manual practices into integrated system and networked operations.

Library automation is now a major issue of focus among academic libraries in Nigerian institutions of higher learning, where different types of software on library management system (open/close source software and hardware) are being pulled together to achieve this objective. Integrated library management system is an organized resource planning system for libraries, capable of tracking items owned, orders made, bills paid, and patrons records. According to Muller, (2011) ILMS is a multi-function, adaptable software application that allows libraries to manage, catalogue and circulate their information materials to patrons. It often comprises a relational database, software to communicate with the particular database, and graphical user interfaces. It separates software functions into modules; each of the modules is integrated with a unified interface.

Each patron and item has a unique identity in the database that allows the software to track its activity. Furthermore, Tosin, (2015) stated that supporting the need of integrated library management system in library operations is highly non-negotiable, this is because of its value provisions, in customer service improvement through greater access to accurate information. It increases productivity and job satisfaction among staff members as it eliminates duplication of effort, more economical and safer means of storing and keeping information.

Methodology

The study is a conceptual research. Hence the researchers adopted systematic literature review, a method that entails critical review of relevant scholarly publication or literature in order to collect relevant data to the study, especially on users' level of awareness and users' computer competency. This is in respect to ILMS utilization. Therefore, local, national and international journal articles, conference papers, textbooks, online information sources etc. were searched, accessed and reviewed and acknowledged accordingly. The researcher chose to adopt this approach because it is suitable to achieving the desired research outcome.

Result and Discussion of Finding

Integrated Library Management System Utilization and User Awareness

Reviewed literature on students' awareness in the utilization of integrated library management system for learning and research in Nigerian universities shows that indeed academic libraries are an integral part of higher institutions of learning and have critical role to play in supporting teaching, learning and research, where the library users majorly constitute students and staff. Students form a vital component of users of academic library resources due to their learning objective. Hence, it is imperatively necessary for Nigerian academic libraries to subscribe to ILMS. Osinulu, (2008) confirmed that low use of the library is due to lack of awareness among users. Strategic awareness has to be ensured among library users regularly, to educate them on the availability of relevant information resources, facilities and services. Esievo & Abdulsalami, (2019) posited that library use brings the library and its services alive; library that is not used is as good as dead because its existence cannot be justified. It is therefore the use to which the library is put that infuses life into its resources and services; hence, use and user studies cannot outlive their usefulness. Information availability does not mean accessibility and utilization; library managers have to market their resources and services to attract users.

According to Abubakar & Adetimirin, (2016) students may enroll for their studies with little or no education on library services and resources; the education acquired might probably not be adequate to enable them to explore and exploit library services and resources for their research, learning, and other scholarly activities. This scenario will pose some degree of impediment during their research work. The most likely cause for low use of e-resources for research works among postgraduate students in university libraries is probably lack of user education. Library staff and students' relationship demands cordiality for effective information resource utilization among the students. Yabanet, (2016) stated that users avoid contacting librarians to solve their information needs as they found librarians to be unfriendly and inhospitable which in turn make the students to lose confidence in themselves in the search for information. If librarians become friendly, it will increase students' confidence. The adherence of the library staff to habit of listening to students will give them the opportunity to know students' information needs and can further redirect their awareness approaches and training.

Integrated Library Management System and Computer Competency

Literature reviewed on students' computer competency in the utilization of integrated library management system for learning and research in Nigerian universities, revealed that the study of Gakibayo, Ikoja-Odong and Okello-Obura (2013), indicate the need

for students to possess basic computer and software applications skills to function in today's workplace. Ojedokun (2007) stated that the negative consequences of lacking ICT skills especially in the 21st century would mean inability of students to fully benefit from learning opportunities either in the classroom or beyond it, possibility of encountering obstacles to full civic participation and possibility of loss of job opportunities.

In other words, ability to use ILMS by any student would have a high impact on academic outcome. Thus, this is an indication that basic computer competency could be a predictor in the use of ILMS. Truly, advances in computer technology and the diffusion of personal computers, multimedia, network resources and productivity software over the years have affected library operations and library users. This has compelled users to possess some basic knowledge of computer application to be able to make use of the recent information system in academic libraries. Background in information and communication technology or computer skills is instrumental for improving the learning and research process leading to ultimate learning outcomes. This can also prepare users to use the advantage in other to cope with the information intensive world.

Conclusion

Integrated library management system is a well-organized and integrated software solution for library housekeeping operation, with updated databases that help to provide information about current and location of library resources to users. It keeps track of books issued, returned and added to library's collections. It allows clients to virtually or remotely browse library information resources without going into the library. Students are a major primary user of academic library resources due to their inherent nature of seeking knowledge. ILMS actually aid learning and research activities and therefore considered as facilitating and enhancing technology. For students to effectively and efficiently use ILMS for the purposes of learning and research, requirements such as user awareness and computer competency are of essence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made

i. It is recommended that proper orientation or instruction mechanism on the use of the ILMS should be facilitated by library managements in order positively affects maximum ILMS utilization. Heads of libraries should create more awareness and training on the availability and purpose of the ILMS among

library users. This could be through library orientation, provision and distribution of manual or pamphlet of the software etc.

ii. It is highly recommended that Nigerian undergraduate students should possess basic and advanced knowledge of computer and web based applications to use ILMS. This is fundamental to actual usage of this contemporary technologies deployed in libraries. This could mean basic knowledge in computer operation and application, knowledge of module of operation in ILMS. Knowledge of online searching strategies has been also found to be helpful in the utilization of ILMS.

iii. Manufacturers of hardware and software should ensure user-friendly approach so that users can access and benefit from such technology.

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