

# Impact of Electronic Publishing in Higher Education Library Services in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** In this fast-changing world, Academic library users seem to have less time for accumulating reading and learning materials. Reading the whole book, articles, and sourcing information traditionally has become a problem. It has become essential for library professionals to provide information to the users within the shortest possible time through electronic resources using the appropriate information and communication technologies [ICTs]. Electronic publishing has become common in knowledge acquisition and it is complimenting printed versions. Besides the web-based resources, there is also much non-network electronic publishing such as Encyclopedias/ Dictionaries/ Directories in CD Rom and DVD, technical and reference publications accessible through mobile phones and other electronic devices. This paper discusses the impact of electronic publishing on academic library services to its users. It conceptualizes the term electronic publishing, identifies the impact of electronic publishing on library services as user satisfaction, mobility and flexibility of information sources, encouraging collaborative work, maintenance and accuracy of publishing works, increased information sources in the library collection, adds value to library services, etc. The paper outlined some benefits and problems of electronic publishing in today's library services. It also discussed the findings observed. The paper is an opinion paper; it investigates the topic using observation research method and available library resources. The significance of this study shows that electronic publishing has come to stay. It will continue to complement the traditional method of library services even become more preferred and relevant in information resources and services rendered in academic libraries.

**Keywords:** E-publishing, Education, Library, and Services

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## 1. Introduction

An academic library is a library that is attached to a higher education institution and serves two complementary purposes; to support the curriculum, and to support the research of the university, faculty, and students. Wikipedia also defining academic libraries state that they are generally affiliated to a specific institution of higher education and offer a wide variety of related services. The collection is aimed at research and learning over reading for recreation both in its monographs and periodicals [1].

The collection of an academic library is enhanced by e-resources in addition to the physical ones. E-books can be downloaded for check-out by students and faculty members. Sections of books as well as journal articles can be put into PDF form and delivered as reading, research, and learning

resources. [2]

Books and other materials that the local academic library does not have can be requested from a wide variety of other institutions, making the academic library's usable collection much larger than what is on its shelves. [3]

An academic library offers many other services for people associated with them. The reference services provided include a reference librarian who can answer questions and provide help via chat over the phone or in person.

There is access to a package of online databases with comprehensive coverage of scholarly journals and other publications for any subject a researcher desires. In any case, as they observed a wide range of single-subject research guides prepared by library staff that patrons can use as well as other resources like citation guides are always available. [4]

There are usually some tools for collaborative work like

dry eraser board, smart board, or electronic resources sharing device that can enhance library services.

Academic libraries also feature extensive computer resources with a wide variety of sometimes very specialized software that is often beyond students' means to provide for themselves. There are also comprehensive printings, scanning, and copying resources too, all these make users satisfied and library services worthwhile. [5]

Academic libraries work with faculty to provide research materials and resources for classes, as well as teaching students about information literacy.

Librarians are often in a position of educating their users, colleges, and peers to successfully locate and evaluate information. Such information needs are better sourced electronically in the present era. Electronic publishing is making so many waves in the information industry; they are becoming more prestigious than the traditional ones. Academic libraries and librarians gradually prefer information service delivery using electronic sources more than the traditional ones. [6, 7] This paper is set to discuss the impact electronic publishing has on academic library services in Nigeria.

The problems as identified include;

- 1) The traditional means of information delivery is no longer satisfying the library
- 2) users.
- 3) The electronic devices are not adequately provided and maintained.
- 4) The government has no standard policy to support electronic resources as it concerns library and it is poorly funded.

The objectives of this paper include;

- 1) Establishing the fact that electronic devices and services are gaining more popularity than the traditional services.
- 2) Identifying the benefits of electronic publishing services in the library.
- 3) Identifying the problems of electronic publishing which makes traditional services a source of complimenting electronic services in this era.
- 4) Identifying the challenges of electronic publishing in Nigerian environment.

## 2. Conceptualizing the Term 'Electronic Publishing'

Many scholars have made various attempts to define, describe, or explain what electronic publishing represent in information services delivery. 'Electronic publishing' is the involvement of information and communication technology in carrying out all the processes of publishing and this can only be accessible and used digitally.

Electronic publishing is also the use of electronic devices in all aspects of information production, management, and distribution of primary and secondary information. It is in essence, any non-print information material produced digitally.

As in reference [3], electronic publishing is a form of publishing in which books, journals, and magazines are being produced and stored electronically rather than in print form. Electronic publications have the qualities of normal publishing like the use of colours, graphics, and images with many conveniences.

Electronic publishing is non-print materials that are produced digitally. These digital materials are identified as bulletin boards, newsgroups, mailing lists, CD-ROM based media, and websites. It is "online information materials", establishing "websites", "homepage" and making information and documents available on the internet, either for sale or for free browsing. [9, 10]

Electronic publishing is also referred to as digital publishing which involves the digital publication of books, magazines, etc. and the development of digital libraries and catalogues. It is the type of publishing that involves the format of materials produced online, on a compact disk, email, or provided in a file format compatible with handheld electronic readers. Electronic publishing can also be regarded as the application of computing software by a publisher to information content created and packaged for a specific audience, and the distribution of the final product through electronic means.

Electronic publishing is the process of production, dissemination, storage, and retrieval of information in an online environment. It is further considered as a digital divide that brings innovative ways of bringing the global economic benefits to the stakeholders, who were marginalized from access to research findings. [11]

Going by the various concepts given to electronic publishing by different scholars, one can conclude that electronic publishing is the application of digital technology in the production, organization, dissemination, storage, and retrieval of information materials.

The success achieved through the shift from traditional information resources to electronic information resources can be credited to digital information systems and the internet. In the area of scholarly publications, there has been a tremendous increase in the use of electronic media. Most academic staff of higher institutions of learning now relies on electronic publishing to publish their research findings in well accredited scholarly journals which can only be accessed electronically.

Electronic publishing through e-books, e-journals, e-databases, and other electronic formats has made a significant impact on library services as such satisfying the desire of modern users who are no longer comfortable with the traditional or print resources.

### 2.1. Electronic Sources of Information in Higher Education Library

Almost all the information sources in traditional form have been translated into electronic form with the inclusion of modern facilities which has made information delivery faster and better. Such sources are;

CDROM/DVD Encyclopedia

CDROM/ DVD Directories  
 Podcast  
 Specialized software  
 E-books  
 E-journals  
 E-manuscripts  
 E-monographs  
 Online Newspapers\magazines  
 Database Plus  
 Internet  
 Printing, scanning, and copying  
 E-mail  
 E- Information policies  
 Wi-Fi connection/Data bundles  
 Social media:-  
 Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, etc.

### 2.2. *Electronic Services in Information Sourcing Include*

Web/Internet Service Delivery;  
 Using phones/ computer systems;  
 Electronic Reference Services; and  
 Library Electronic Services Delivery.

Information sources can come from anywhere- media, blogs, - personal experiences, books, journals and magazines, articles, experts' opinions, encyclopedia, and web pages – and the type of information you need will change depending on your query.

## 3. Impact of Electronic Publishing on Higher Education Library Services

- 1) User Satisfaction
- 2) Collaborative work
- 3) Accuracy of published works
- 4) Mobility and flexibility
- 5) Added value to library services
- 6) Increased information sources

### 3.1. *User Satisfaction*

Electronic publishing as “in reference [4] provides greater user satisfaction. Several libraries have cut down on their purchase of the printed version; this awakening is making users more dependent on the electronic versions which give them more information with ease”.

They have removed the facility for the "quick and dirty" search which is still very much a part of scholarly inquiry. According to them, over-dependence on serendipitous findings of materials are no longer necessary since "irrelevant" contiguous items are no longer brought together by "happy chance".

The introduction of online search has given the users direct access to information, living the information providers with little reference jobs. What does this mean to librarians? Firstly, the money that could be going into their budget is being spent elsewhere- frequently within the departmental funds. Secondly, they are certainly losing the chances of

being intermediaries to their users with the libraries' information handling also endangered. [12]

### 3.2. *Collaborative Works*

There are usually some tools for collaborative works like dry eraser board, smart board, electronic resources sharing devices like Adobe connecting platform, Zoom platform etc. Information that the local academic library does not have can be requested from a wide variety of other institutions, making the academic library's usable collection much larger than what is on its shelves as in reference [1].

There is access to a package of online databases with comprehensive coverage of scholarly journals and other publications for any subject a researcher wants. There are also wide ranges of single-subject research guides prepared by library staff that patrons can use in a particular library or beyond. Other electronic resources such as citation guides which are often consulted by other libraries through various library networks can be found.

Academic libraries feature, extends to computer resources with a wide range of specialized software that is expensive for students to provide so there is a need for collaborative work to make information needed available [13].

### 3.3. *Accuracy of Published Works*

Electronic publishing allows more accurate complications of users' statistics which should enable publishers to access their products. Electronic publishing can be a way to highlight the most relevant information by releasing it faster yet disciplines vary in their acceptance of pre-publication on the web. Some research findings can be published in online journals yet be accepted by publishers to be published with some update.

### 3.4. *Mobility and Flexibility*

Electronic materials are easier to move from one location to another, larger volumes of information materials like books even an entire library collection can easily be stored in CD ROM, Flash Drive, and other electronic software/gadgets. These can be transferred to users in different places at the same time using electronic devices. “A variety of lightweight and user-friendly e-books and handheld devices that make it easier to read on the move are often in use” as in reference [3].

Through electronic publishing data can now be transmitted and disseminated to practically any part of the world at the speed of light. With the introduction of email, information can be sent from one academic library to another. Publishers' data files and graphics can move around the world in a split of seconds [2].

The telephone network, digital transmission of voice and data over ordinary telephone copper wires has made information easily accessible. Researchers and students use various software applications to harness the required information. Whatsapp groups, Facebook, messenger, youtube, Instagram, and the entire web/internet facilities are

facilitators to mobility and flexibility of information acquisition and utilization [14-16].

The potential of information technology has made possible the utilization of several scanned documents without violating the copyright law; these are read and downloaded by library users for free. Electronic publishing has improved academic library services to a great extent that one cannot carefully divorce electronic services from the general library services and operation in the present generation.

### 3.5. Added Values to Library Services

Electronic publishing, networked information, and dissemination have created new opportunities for information providers. Value has been added to academic library services. Through electronic means, library staff now package and repackage information to meet the current trend with electronic publishing, it is possible to have Print on demand (POD) publications which are hybrid publications that reside in Cyberspace until they are printed on special digital printing machine [17]. Traditional library services have given way for the electronic services and it has projected modern Information Technology image for libraries and librarians.

#### 3.6. Increased Information Sources

There is a phenomenal amount of information available online, via WebPages, blogs, forums, social media, catalogues and so on. As there is so much information available and because such information can be published quickly and easily by anybody and at any time, reliable sources must be harnessed and chosen. This increased information source has made the internet a very good ground for research especially in technology and current affairs. (www.lisbdnet.com)

## 4. The Benefits and Problems of Electronic Publishing and Digital Library

### 4.1. Benefits of Electronic Publishing and Digital Library

In most academic libraries documents are found commonly online and the obvious benefits include;

- 1) Users can access the information from anywhere that has an internet connection.
- 2) Users can access the information when they want- not just when the physical library is open.
- 3) As documents (books, journals, articles, etc) are held electronically, numerous people can be reading the same document at the same time.
- 4) Users can search for electronic documents or the whole libraries for documents, quickly to find relevant information.

### 4.2. Problems of Electronic Publishing and Digital Library

- 1) The documents available electronically may be limited. This will depend on which document the library

subscribed to or the electronic version bought.

- 2) An older and historic document may not be available electronically.
- 3) Some people find it easier to work with physical copies of books and other print materials to flip through the pages and easily bookmark sections.
- 4) Electronic publishing and digital libraries can fail users at any time due to power failure or network problems. It is a good practice to use a combination of traditional library resources, familiarize with library facilities available, and the type of documents that are available otherwise when the electronic content fails all hope will be lost. All sources of information can be relevant depending on the subject matter of the research. [18]
- 5) Insufficient data bundles to access the internet/unavailability of WI-FI connection can hinder effective service delivery.

## 5. Observations and Discussion of Identified Challenges

While it is beyond every reasonable doubt that electronic publishing is playing vital roles in information supply in this era, it should also be stated clearly that certain constraints becloud it. Some are global while some are peculiar to Nigeria.

The issues of e-publishing as observed, include but not limited to these:

- 1) Lack of Adequate power supply: Accessing electronic materials in an environment where electrical power supply is inadequate is a problem. Most electronic materials require a power supply for computers and other communication gadgets to be used in accessing information. Nigeria is yet to attain the height of a regular power supply.
- 2) Transient Materials: The ephemeral natures of materials on the internet make them to be temporal compared with the print format. Materials that are on the internet today might not be there tomorrow. Such materials might be removed or altered.
- 3) Lack of qualified manpower: Those who are qualified and are experienced in the use and maintenance of electronic gadgets are few. Those with little knowledge are in habit of spoiling the electronic systems in the bid to maintain or repair the faulty ones. Other people are inexperienced; lack the skills and technical know-how.
- 4) Poor network service: Network providers are not efficient in providing the network that will enhance the web/internet services. Due to poor network connectivity, access to electronic materials is either delayed or denied.
- 5) Language barriers: Many of the electronic materials are in foreign languages; access to the real information is limited due to the language barrier. Most African nations are multilingual; it is difficult to capture them in computer and other communication gadgets since they don't have a single language as their lingua-franca and

most of their languages are not developed.

- 6) Lack of sustainability: Donor agents who would sponsor electronic publishing and other internet productive activities are inactive in Africa. In the developed countries a good number of organizations and splinted individuals would volunteers to fund electronic references, electronic discoveries, electronic innovations, etc. There is little or no fund to maintain electronic facilities.
- 7) High Telecommunication Access charges: while it is true that internet facilities are sometimes disabled in our nations, the costs are usually unbearable for an average person. The cost of telecommunication, the cost of power supply, the cost of information on the internet, and other tariffs are so burdensome for the average person in our nation Nigeria.
- 8) Unavailability of android phones, functioning laptops/desktop computers: Due to poor financial state, some library users cannot afford android phones, functioning laptops/desktop computers. This situation has constantly compelled them to make use of the traditional library services.

## 6. Conclusion

Nigeria is a third world country and higher educational systems are still very much attached to the traditional library services due to the findings stated above. Majority of academic libraries need to upgrade and train the staff to be electronically compliant for better services. This study shows that electronic publishing has come to stay. It will continue to compliment the traditional library services method even become more preferred in information provision and services rendered in higher institution libraries.

## 7. Recommendation

Higher education libraries and the network providers' need to have good telecommunication infrastructure in place for the implementation of functional electronic library services.

There is a need to address the poorly developed information communication technologies infrastructure and train the existing staff to improve their services.

The government should make effort to provide policy for electronic devices and services in libraries and implement it to take care of information development electronically and support the aims and objectives of the higher institutions that own the libraries.

Translators who can turn foreign language materials into the local languages that are developed like Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba are required.

Adequate funding from the government, parent body and philanthropist re required for sustainability.

Users should make effort to provide their personal computers, laptops and android phones to enhance their library use and researches without waiting for the limited and faulty systems of the library.

## 8. Suggestion

Considering the significant contribution of this study to higher education library services, a similar study should be conducted to cover all the activities of electronic publishing in other libraries such as special library, public library, school library etc.

This paper is an opinion paper as such they authors suggest that research methodology work should be carried out in Nigeria to discover the influence of electronic publishing in libraries to get consistent result.

A comparative study can be conducted on the usability and preference of electronic materials and traditional library materials in Nigerian libraries.

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