

Use of Electronic Information Resources by Undergraduates of National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin Study Center

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Abstract:

Purpose: *Electronic information resources are essential to distance education students in achieving academic success as they offer quality information and have made learning flexible. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the use of Electronic information resources among students of National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin Study center.*

Design/methodology/approach: *The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Four objectives and four research questions were formulated to guide the study. A convenience sampling technique was used to select 120 undergraduates in their study center. A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed to the students in their study center with a return rate of 83.3%. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and mean scores.*

Findings: *The results show that the respondents use electronic mail, e-news, e-books, and CD-ROMs among others. The respondents use e-mail, e-news and e-books frequently while online databases, e-journals and CD-ROMs are used less frequently. The results also revealed that the students use e-resources for research, classwork/assignment, to stay informed and for collaboration. Furthermore, financial constraints, erratic power supply, and poor internet connectivity constitute barriers to effective use of EIRs by the students.*

Implication: *The research results indicated that there is the need for more awareness of the electronic information resources that are available in the library. Also, adequate funding of the universities by the Nigerian government is crucial for the provision of facilities and resources to support learning and research.*

Originality/Value: *It was recommended that there should be regular training on the use of electronic information resources in the library and that the institution library should subscribe to more online databases in different disciplines for scholarly research.*

Keywords: *Distance learning; Electronic information resources; National Open University of Nigeria; Nigeria; Use of EIRs*

Type: *Empirical research*

Introduction

Electronic information resources (EIRs) are the bedrock of academic success as they provide accurate and timely information for better educational outcomes and aid in the retrieval of huge amount of information for teaching, learning and research (Ekenna & Mabawonku, 2013). Topaloglu and Tekkanat (2014) stated that the world needs individuals who can renew their knowledge all the time, adapt to changes, follow new trends and build knowledge while being a conscious consumer of knowledge. However, libraries have a role to play in making sure that the information need of students and in particular, distance learners are taken care of. They are to build more of

electronic collections than print such as e-book, e-journals, and electronic reference materials like encyclopedias in different subject matters. These resources are made available through computers and computer-related devices.

According to Omoike (2013), electronic information resources (EIRs) comprise sets of instructional materials such as audio and video cassettes, CD-ROM, television and radio broadcast as well as multimedia components such as computer and satellites. Undergraduate students make use of e-books, e-journals, electronic reference materials like e-encyclopedias, e-theses/dissertations, CD-ROM databases, e-mail and e-news. Electronic

information resources (EIRs) have become very important in academic work. Teaching, learning and research have been made easier through the use of EIRs. In lieu of this, academic libraries now make available and provide access to vast amount of electronic information resources that is not easily available on print media. EIRs offer the opportunity of searching multiple databases at the same time.

Distance education allows students to study without the constraints of time and space. The goals of distance education in Nigeria as specified in the National policy on education include the provision of access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities for those who would have been denied and meeting special needs of employers by mounting special certificate courses for their employees at their work place (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). This led to the initial establishment of the National Open University of Nigeria on 25th April 1984 with study centers in all the states of the federation.

Electronic information resources (EIRs) that are available for use by students include e-journal, e-books, e-references, e-news, e-mail, Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) databases, and Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). The use of electronic information resources (EIRs) affords researchers and students the opportunity to have access to global information resources, especially the Internet for their scholarly work. Higher education students make use of EIRs for many purposes; mostly for academic purpose. Students use EIRs to retrieve current literature to study, carry out assignments and prepare for examinations; EIRs are also used to carry out research projects, communicate and collaborate with peers and teachers via the Internet on e-mail or by following blog discussions (Adeniran, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The university education system is developing and advancing both in the application of technology to its teaching, learning and research processes. Distance learning is a peculiar type of university education with limited interaction between teacher and students thus, students have to rely more on different forms of learning resources. Towards achieving its set objectives, the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) set up various ICT tools for use by staff and students. It has also acquired electronic

information resources in an attempt to enhance the teaching and learning process to meet up with the global trend and standard of education. Electronic information resources have indeed become very important to higher education students in accessing up-to-date information at the right time and in the right form. They enable students to have access to quality information and offer opportunity for searching multiple database files per time which has reduced the time spent by students searching for information in the print media. Despite the high dependence of distance learning on ICT and the great potentials EIRs hold for effective teaching, learning and research in universities, studies have revealed that electronic information resources are grossly underutilized (Omoike, 2013). This study is therefore set out to investigate the pattern of use of EIRs among undergraduates of NOUN in Ilorin study center.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives are to:

1. find out the types of electronic information resources used by the students of the National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center;
2. ascertain the purpose of use of electronic information resources by the students of the National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center;
3. find out the frequency of use of electronic information resources by the students of the National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center;
4. identify the challenges faced by the students of National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center in the use of electronic information resources.

The study was set out to answer the following questions:

Research Questions

1. What are the electronic information resources used by the students of the National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center?
2. Why do students of the National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center use electronic information resources?
3. How frequent do the students of the National Open University of Nigeria in

Ilorin study center use electronic information resources?

4. What factors constrain the use of electronic information resources by the students of the National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center?

Literature Review

Ojha and Tiwari (2016) stated that proper and reliable communication is a pre-requisite to effective and efficient use of electronic resources available free in the web space or for a fee with the aid of technology. Quadri and Abomoge (2013) asserted that the Internet is now a means by which the digital divide between the developed and the developing countries is gradually closing up. The use of electronic resources affords researchers and students the opportunity to have access to global information resources, especially the Internet for their scholarly work. Distance learning programmes have been made of the same standard and quality with the conventional university programmes with the use of electronic information resources in teaching, learning and research.

According to Emwata and Nwalo (2013), the use of electronic resources has given rise to new modes of organizing the educational environment in tertiary institutions and has introduced a new concept of teaching-learning process. They also posited that electronic resources have boosted the collection of libraries worldwide and in a special way in Nigerian university libraries. Toyo (2017) revealed that undergraduates in Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria made use of electronic resources such as e-discussions, e-news, e-journals, CD-ROM, e-books and e-data archives. Course materials are provided on CD-ROM for students' use which affords the students to peruse as convenient. The study found out low use of online databases and e-data archives among the students. All these resources have really influenced learning and improved the quality of education as this is evident in distance learning.

Undergraduates make use of EIR for many purposes. They use e-resources mostly for academic purpose that is, to study and prepare for examinations, to do class assignment, and carry out research, retrieving current literature for studies, and to communicate and collaborate with peers and teachers via the Internet on e-mail or by following blog discussions. E-books

and e-journal articles are used to acquire knowledge and carry out research by the students (Omoike, 2013; Ajayi, Shorunke & Aboyade, 2014). Course materials are provided on CD-ROM for students' use which affords students to peruse as convenient. All these resources have really influenced learning and improved the quality of education as this is evident in distance learning.

In a study of availability and utilization of library e-resources in private universities in Ogun state by Quadri, Adetimirin and Idowu (2014), Internet use was reported to be high in the selected universities; the undergraduates used e-resources for classwork and assignment and for research purposes. University students also use electronic resources to stay aware and keep abreast of what is going on in the society (Abubakar & Adetimirin, 2015). Ajayi, Shorunke and Aboyade (2014) carried out a study on the influence of electronic resources use on students' reading culture in Nigerian Universities. They found out that the students use e-journals, e-news and e-books mostly and that they often utilize electronic information resources. The students also attested to the fact that EIRs use has improved their reading habit, expanded their reading possibilities and made reading more enjoyable. Also, low use of e-resources was reported in a study on factors affecting utilization of electronic health information resources in Universities in Uganda (Alison, Kiyingi and Baziraake, 2012).

Gakibayo, Ikoja-Odongo, and Okello-Obura (2013) study also revealed low use of EIRs in Uganda. Several authors have reported low use of electronic information resources by the students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria (Abubakar & Adetimirin, 2015; Omoike, 2013). The study carried out by Emwata and Nwalo (2013) revealed that undergraduate students did not highly utilize the available electronic resources and the subject background had not influenced the use of electronic resources. Omoike (2013) conducted a study on the use of electronic information resources by students of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in Lagos and Ibadan study centers. The study discovered lack of awareness of the different types of EIRs available at their study centers. It was also revealed that the extent of use of EIRs by the distance students in the two study centers was low.

Adeniran (2013) conducted a study on usage of electronic resources by undergraduates at the Redeemer's University, Nigeria. The findings revealed that 241 out of the 256 respondents agreed that they used the electronic resources for research purpose, 147 indicated that they used EIRs for current awareness purpose, 232 agreed they used e-resources to acquire information, 250 indicated that they used EIR for assignment. Also, 135 respondents agreed that they used them for e-mail purpose while 140 of them indicated that they used electronic resources for news acquisition. From the study, it was revealed that majority of the respondents do not use the electronic resources available in Redeemer's University regularly. This shows that the extent of use of electronic resources at the Redeemer's university was low. Therefore, a study that seeks to examine the extent of use of EIRs in tertiary institutions is needful as supported by literature.

It is of utmost importance to address the low use of EIRs by higher education students in Nigeria as enormous amount of money is expended in our libraries to provide these resources. The university management and academic libraries should also put in place, conditions that facilitate the use of e-resources to justify the provision as lack of relevant information, physical infrastructure and skills can hinder access to essential information.

Gakibayo, Ikoja-Odongo, and Okello-Obura (2013) revealed low usage of electronic information resources in the University library by the students of Mbarara University, Uganda. A study was carried out by Ekenna and Mabawonku (2013) on information retrieval skills and use of the library electronic resources by university undergraduates in Nigeria. The finding of the study revealed under-utilization of electronic resources for research. The study also showed that the undergraduates lacked requisite skills for the use of e-resources. Adeleke & Emeahara (2016) carried out a study on the relationship between information literacy and use of electronic information resources by the students of the University of Ibadan and found out low usage of e-resources due to lack of search technique skills. Omosekejimi, Eghworo and Ogo (2015) revealed low usage of EIR by the students of Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (FUPRE) owing to lack of awareness or lack of skills required to navigate the modern technology.

Adewole-Odeshi (2014) carried out a study on attitude of students towards e-learning in South-West Nigerian Universities and found out that students have positive attitudes towards e-learning because they find the system easy to use and useful for their course work and that attitude influences the intention to use an e-learning system. The study revealed factors that militate against effective use of EIR which include: poor electricity supply, poor internet connectivity, insufficient skill, financial problems and poor training programme. Poor Internet connectivity was reported in literature which seems to be the main factor that affects access to and usage of e-resources (Toyo, 2017; Quadri, Adetimirin & Idowu, 2014; Alison, Kiyingi and Baziraake, 2012). In the same vein, Erratic power supply also constitute a challenge to effective use of electronic resources (Toyo, 2017; Abubakar & Adetimirin, 2015; Omoike, 2013; Oyedapo and Ojo, 2013). Other factors that affect use of electronic information resources are: limited number of facilities or inadequate access to computers as reported by (Oyedapo & Ojo, 2013 and Msagati, 2014; Alison, Kiyingi & Baziraake, 2012). Lack of skills to make productive searches was also reported by (Ajayi, Shorunke and Aboyade, 2014; Msagati, 2014; Alison, Kiyingi & Baziraake, 2012).

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey. The target population of this study comprised undergraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in Ilorin study center. The Ilorin study center is located in Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara state, Nigeria. The total population at the time of this study was 987 students studying in 5 faculties, including Arts and Social Sciences, Education, Law, Management Sciences, and Science and Technology. A sample of 120 respondents were selected using convenience sampling technique from those who are willing to participate in the study and also based on their availability during the period of study. A self-structured questionnaire with a Cronbach's reliability coefficient of 0.91 was used to elicit information from the respondents. Questionnaires (120) were administered physically to the students at their study center. A return rate of 83.3% was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS version 21.

Results

Results on the demographic characteristics of respondents on Table 1 revealed that the highest number of respondents were found in the age bracket of 16-25 years with 63 (63.0%), followed by 26-35 years age bracket with 26 (26.0%), those in the age range 36-45 years constituted 10 (10.0%) while only one (1.0%) respondents was found in the age range 46 years and above. Result on gender revealed that majority of the respondents were males 59

(59.0%) while females constitute 41 (41.0%) percent. This result implies that there is a dominance of male to female students learning at a distance in Ilorin study center of NOUN. It also indicates that more youths now undertake open and distance learning in Nigeria which may be as a result of the inadequate number of universities in Nigeria to admit a greater number of secondary school leaving students who are eligible for admission.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	%
Faculty	Arts and Social Sciences	23	23.0
	Education	23	23.0
	Law	3	3.0
	Management	31	31.0
	Science and Technology	20	20.0
Age	16-25 years	63	63.0
	26-35 years	26	26.0
	36-45 years	10	10.0
	46 years and above	1	1.0
Marital Status	Single	85	85.0
	Married	15	15.0
Gender	Male	59	59.0
	Female	41	41.0
Educational Qualification	O' Level	54	54.0
	OND/NCE	18	18.0
	BSc./HND	27	27.0
	Others (NABTEB)	1	1.0

Research Question 1: What are the electronic information resources used by the students of the National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center?

The various types of EIRs that were used by the respondents are revealed in Figure 1. The result shows that majority of the respondents (86, 86%) indicated they use E-mail, (85, 85%) used E-news, (80, 80.0%) used E-books, CD-ROM use constituted (72, 72.0%) use of E-journals

was indicated by (67, 67%) respondents while the use of E-references had 61 (61.0%) respondents and the least used among the EIRs was online databases with 57 (57.0%) respondents. This result implies that use of online databases was not common among the students of NOUN in Ilorin study center. This calls for subscription to online databases by the NOUN library and creation of awareness of the available online databases in the library.

Frequency Distribution of Types of EIRs Used by Respondents

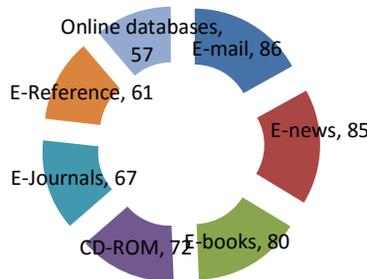


Figure 1: Types of EIRs Used by the Respondents

Table 2: Purpose of use of Electronic Information Resources by the Respondents

Purpose	\bar{x}	Std. Dev.
Project/Research	3.36	. 882
Classwork/assignment	3.19	. 992
Staying informed	3.05	1.218
Collaboration and Communication	2.80	1.223
Grand Mean	3.10	

* N= 100

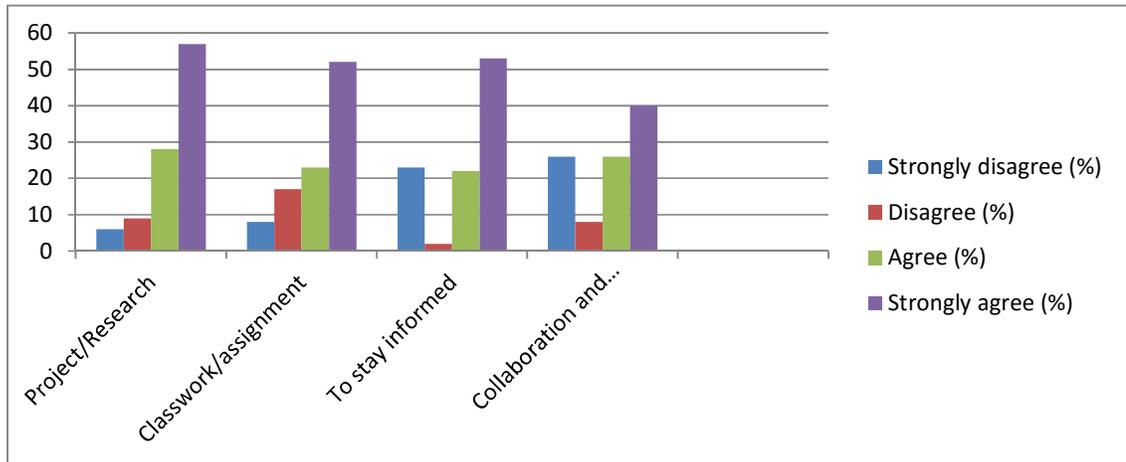


Figure 2: Distribution of Purpose of Use of EIRs by the Respondents

Research Question 2: Why do students of the National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center use electronic information resources?

The result for the purpose for which the students of NOUN in Ilorin study center use electronic information resources is shown in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Figure 2 reveals that the respondents use EIRs for various academic purposes. The respondents used EIRs more for the purpose of carrying out project/research ($\bar{x}= 3.36$), followed by the purpose of classwork and assignment ($\bar{x}= 3.19$). The respondents also used EIRs for the purpose of staying informed ($\bar{x}= 3.05$) while the use of EIRs for the purpose of collaboration and communication had a mean score of 2.80. The grand mean of the purpose of use of EIRs by the

respondents was 3.10. It therefore follows that the students use electronic resources for all classwork, assignment, research project, staying informed and for collaboration and communication. This is expected among the students for the fact that they have little or no contact with their teachers which requires them to use electronic resources for easy, fast and up-to-date information.

Research Question 3: How frequent do the students of the National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin Study center use electronic information resources?

Table 3 shows the frequency of use of electronic information resources by the students of National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin study center.

Table 3: Frequency of Use of Electronic information resources

Use of EIR	Daily (%)	Weekly (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)	\bar{x}	Std. Dev
Electronic mail	62.0	19.0	4.0	15.0	3.28	.957
E-news	55.0	22.0	9.0	14.0	3.18	.995
E-books	43.0	30.0	7.0	20.0	2.96	.998
E-references	31.0	30.0	6.0	33.0	2.59	1.051
CD-ROM	29.0	27.0	16.0	28.0	2.57	1.045
E-journals	27.0	28.0	12.0	33.0	2.48	1.027
Online databases	20.0	24.0	13.0	43.0	2.21	1.091
Grand Mean	2.75					

* N= 100

Table 3 reveals the frequency of use of EIRs by the respondents. The result shows that 62.0% of the respondents used e-mail on daily basis, 19.0% on weekly basis while 15% never used e-mail. As regards e-news, 55% of the respondents indicated daily use, 22.0% indicated weekly while 14% never used e-news. E-books were used by 43.0% of the respondents on daily basis, 30.0% on weekly basis, while 20.0% never used e-books. The frequency of use of e-mail had a mean score of 3.28, E-news ($\bar{x} = 3.18$), E-books ($\bar{x} = 2.96$). The grand mean of the frequency of use of EIRs by the respondents was 2.75. The result shows that e-references, CD-ROM, E-journals and online databases were not frequently used by the respondents, having mean less than the grand mean ($\bar{x}=2.75$).

Research Question 4: What factors constrain the use of electronic information resources by

the students of the National Open University of Nigeria in South-West, Nigeria?

Figure 3 shows that the most common challenge in the use of electronic information resources as indicated by the respondents was financial constraints (54, 54.0%), this is followed by poor Internet connectivity (53, 53.0%), lack of skills constituted (52, 52.0%) while erratic power supply was also reported by the respondents (51, 51.0%). Most of the respondents did not view inadequate computer facilities and lack of training as constraints to effective use of EIRs. It is obvious from the results that financial constraints pose the greatest challenge to use of EIRs; this may be as a result of lack of fund on the part of the management of the institution or financial incapacitation of the students due to poverty. This situation demands urgent attention by the Nigerian government.

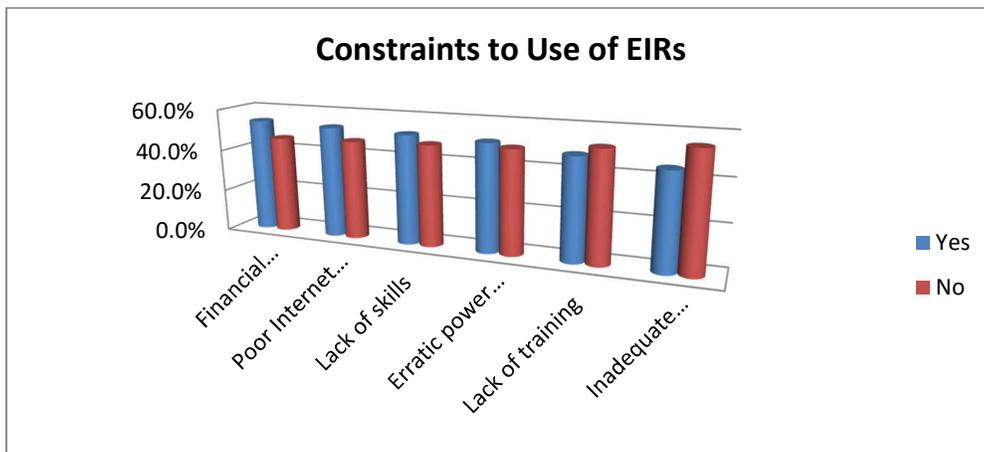


Figure 3: Frequency Distribution of Constraints to Use of EIRs by the Respondents

Discussion of Findings

The study investigated the types of EIRs used by the students of National Open University of Nigeria in Ilorin center. The finding obtained in the study revealed that electronic mail was mostly used by the students, followed by the use of electronic news while online databases were the least used. The finding on EIRs used by the respondents agrees with the finding by Omoike (2013). The reason for the low use of online databases by the undergraduate students in this study could be as a result of the institution not subscribing to some online databases relevant to the students’ disciplines or it may be due to lack of awareness of their availability. Some online databases such as LexisNexis, OARE and HINARI are not freely available on the Internet, but are subscribed to by the institution. The implication of this finding is that students will be

deficient in using information resources that are germane to their discipline when carrying out research and project.

Finding on the frequency of use of electronic information resources revealed that the frequency of use of EIRs by the students of NOUN in Ilorin study center was moderate. The electronic mail, e-news and e-books were the most frequently used. However, the use of e-references and online databases by the students of NOUN were low. The finding concurred with the findings by (Ajayi, Shorunke & Aboyade, 2014; Toyo, 2017) that revealed that the students in Nigerian universities use e-books, and e-news mostly and that they often utilize electronic information resources. This result contradicts the findings of (Emwata & Nwalo, 2013; Omoike, 2013 and Abubakar & Adetimirin, 2015) who

found out low usage of electronic information resources by undergraduate students.

The finding on the purpose of use of EIRs by the NOUN students indicates that the respondents use the e-resources for the purpose of writing research projects, carrying out classwork and assignment and also for collaboration and communication. Distance learning students have minimal interactions with their teachers; thus, most of their class work, assignments and even examinations are done electronically using ICT tools. The finding of this study corroborates the findings from past studies such as (Adeniran, 2013; Oyedapo and Ojo, 2013).

Financial constraint was found to pose a challenge to effective use of EIRs by the respondents. This constraint may be as a result of the socio-economic situation of the students as many of them are not gainfully employed and some just finished their secondary education, not yet working. Many of these students cannot afford to own personal computers and access internet services. Poor internet connectivity was also found to hinder EIRs use by the students. The finding is in consonance with that of Omoike (2013) who revealed erratic power supply, poor internet services and high cost of access as major challenges to effective use of e-resources. However, the study revealed that inadequacy of computer facilities was not a challenge to the use of e-resources by the NOUN students and that lack of skills was a challenge. These findings concur with the finding by Omoisejimi, Eghworo and Ogo (2015) who revealed low usage of EIRs by the students of Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (FUPRE) due to lack of skills required to navigate the modern technology.

The implications of the findings on the challenges facing students in using EIRs are that adequate funding, regular power supply, and stable Internet connection are facilitating conditions that enhance the use of e-resources. Efforts should be made by the Nigerian government in tackling the problem of power supply and improve the economic condition of the nation by providing ICT facilities to students at subsidized fee in order to bridge the digital divide and enable inclusion in the information society. This situation calls for intervention of the university management in ensuring facilitating conditions for the use of technology and electronic resources by the students and the university community at large.

Conclusions

Electronic information resources are indeed very important to the success and achievement of higher education students and most especially distance learning students as they rely more on electronic learning. This study therefore has revealed that the students of NOUN in Ilorin study center used electronic mail, e-news, e-books frequently while CD-ROMs, e-references, e-journals and online databases were not frequently used. Furthermore, the study also revealed that the students use EIRs for academic purposes that is, classwork, assignments, research project and collaboration. As fundamental as electronic resources are to distance education, financial constraints, poor internet connectivity and lack of skills are barriers to effective use of electronic information resources by the students. It is therefore concluded that more electronic information resources are needed for use by students and scholars in NOUN for teaching, learning and research and that skills to make effective use of the resources be imparted on the students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

- The management of NOUN should adequately fund the library to subscribe to a wide variety of online databases in various disciplines. These resources should be made accessible to students by putting in place necessary infrastructures in the library in order to enhance their academic success and increase research productivity of faculty members in the universities.
- Awareness of the available electronic information resources in the library should be created by the NOUN library as this will help promote use and justify the fund expended in providing the resources.
- Regular training/user education on the use of e-resources should be provided by the NOUN library to the entire user community in the study centers of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) for maximum use of e-resources.

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