Chapter 73
Librarian without Building in an E-Learning Environment:
Needed Skills, Challenges, and Solutions

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses e-learning, its advantages and challenges, the concept of a librarian without a building, and the characteristics and skills of a librarian without a building in an e-learning environment. The chapter empirically looks at the need for an e-librarian in an e-learning environment, the needed skills for such a librarian, and their challenges. Possible solutions to identify challenges are also discussed. The survey method was used for the study; the questionnaire was designed and administered to 138 librarians from Academic libraries in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. 127 questionnaires were returned and used for analysis. The study reveals that there is a great need for e-librarians in e-learning environments, and that the librarians must possess such skills as high computer literacy, ability to learn fast, teach, and evaluate others. It was also discovered that e-librarians are faced with technical, administrative, financial, and capacity building challenges. Based on these, the authors recommend that e-librarians should be supported at all levels; they should be ready to develop themselves, strive at all cost to acquire more knowledge and skills in order to stand the changing nature of their job. It is also recommended that government agencies that accredit programmes at tertiary institutions should make sure that any institution that offers e-learning must also have a well organized e-library, and a well trained e-librarian must man the library. The study concludes that e-library and e-librarian without building must be recognized and empowered as part of the e-teaching and learning processes.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the bedrock of any nation. No nation can develop without proper and effective educational systems. Libraries from the ancient time to present day are always part of any educational system. No educational system can be effective without library as supporting instrument. With the advent of Information and Communication Technologies in education, E- learning platforms have been created to provide students with the opportunity to continue their education and career development without the rigidity and rigorous life of the school system. The creation of the E-learning platforms has placed additional roles on the library and the librarian whose responsibility will now include rendering services to the E-learners. Thus the concept of E- library, Virtual library, and E- librarian, librarian without building come to place.

In the last few decades, the world has gone through significant change in terms of advancements in technology and the information exchange. These advancements in information and communication technology have led to e-learning becoming a focus of global attention. E-learning", in simple terms, is Electronic Learning or any learning facilitated by electronic means which would include computer-based training (CBT) with modules, CD-ROM training, web-enabled, and Internet learning. Advent of E-learning has provided students with an opportunity to continue their education or personal pursue and career development without the rigidity and rigorous life of the school environment. This online format of Learning, offers the students a great deal of flexibility in terms of when they study, how they study, and how quickly they cover and master any given material.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to find out:

1. Whether there is need for E- Librarian in an E- Learning environment.
2. The skills that would be needed by librarian in an E- Learning environment.
3. The challenges of E-librarian in an E-Learning environment.
4. Prefer solution to the challenges.

BACKGROUND

Over the years, there have been conflicts in the definitions of E-Learning; some authors have explicitly defined e-learning, others have implied a specific definition, but these definitions have materialize, some through conflicting views of other definitions, and some just by simply comparing defining characteristics with other existing terms. Ellis (2004) disagrees with authors like Nichols (2003) who defined e-Learning as strictly gaining access to knowledge using technological tools that are web-based, web-distributed, or web-capable. Ellis believes that e-Learning does not only cover content and instructional methods delivered via CD-ROM, the Internet or an Intranet. Tavangarian, D., Leypold, M. E., Nolting, K., Roser, M., & Voigt, D. (2004), stated that e- Learning is not only procedural but also shows some transformation of an individual's experience into the individual's knowledge through the knowledge construction process. Ellis (2004) and Triacca, L., Bolchini, D., Botturi, L., & Inversini, A. (2004) believe that some level of interactivity needs to be included to make the definition truly applicable in describing the learning experience, even though Triacca et al. (2004) added that e- Learning was a type of online learning. However, some authors have made reference to other terms such as online course/learning, web-based learning, web-based training, learning objects or distance learning believing that the terms can be used synonymously (Dringus & Cohen, 2005; Khan, 2001; Triacca et al., 2004; Wagner, 2001). Clark & Mayer, (2003), states that E-learning can be defined as instruc-

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