

Chapter 10

Faculty Using E-Journals in Developing Countries: Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have affected every sphere of human endeavor, including teaching, learning, and research. The evolution of ICTs has brought about the emergence of electronic journals (also known as e-journals). This chapter focuses on electronic journals and their importance in teaching and research. It covers the evolution of e-journals in the education landscape and current trends in the use of e-journals in developing countries. The chapter also examines the challenges of e-journal usage in developing countries and made recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

The application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the education context has revolutionized teaching and research. ICTs, especially the Internet, have transformed the formats and access to educational resources like texts, journals, theses, and so on. Educational resources, which hitherto were only available in print formats, now have electronic versions. Materials which could only be read in print form can now be accessed by multiple users through the Internet.

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In institutions of higher learning like Universities, one of the most important information resources for teaching and research are journals. Omotayo (2010) opined that journals are the most valued information communication channel for researchers and academics. The production of journals dates to the 17th century, and their importance has not diminished. Academic journals contain current research findings and scholarly communication in given fields of study. The quality of any given research or scholarly work is measured by the number of articles reviewed and cited from reputable journals. Further, academics and scholars are rated globally by the number of articles and research they have published in reputable journals. When a journal appears in electronic version and may be viewed and accessed through the Internet, it is referred to as e-journal. Before the middle of the 20th century, journals only existed in print format. With the emergence of ICTs in education, this has changed.

Most journals are now published in print and electronic versions as well. Cole (2004) stated that there were 115 e-journals in existence in 1995. The same author alluded that the number had increased to 1300 within three years in 1998. By the year of 1999, the figure had increased to about 10,000 and by 2004, the number of e-journals in existence globally had increased to 30,000. The emergence of the “open access” and “open archiving” initiatives has brought about an unprecedented increase in the number of e-journals now accessible through the Internet. Major publishers of academic books and journals have also taken advantage of the Internet and online opportunities to market, sell, and create access to their products on subscription basis. Some journals are now exclusively published in electronic versions only.

Consequently, individuals and libraries are forced to purchase electronic journals (also called e-journals) for teaching and research. Trends in the academia show that faculty and researchers have become more interested in the use of e-journals, rather than journals in print format for their academic endeavors. This paradigm shift has become a global trend which cannot be ignored.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter focuses on issues and challenges affecting faculty use of electronic journals for teaching and research from the developing countries perspectives. It begins with the transformational impact of ICTs on academic institutions as well as information resources paving the way for open access initiative and how the development has increased e-journal use. This was followed by a brief discussion on the historical development of e-journals: how they have gained prominence among electronic resources as used in the present education landscape was presented taking cue from literature. This chapter discusses the potential benefits of e-journals for teachers and researchers, as well as the challenges involved. The chapter proposes solutions to foreseeable problems and suggests directions for future research.

Overview of Developing Countries

There is no universally accepted approach for classifying nations as either developed, developing, or underdeveloped. Several parameters have been proposed as guidelines for such classifications. While some of the ranking considered socio-economic indicators, others employed technological indices. Research and development considerations have also been observed (Gaillard, 2010). The latter noted that nations could also be categorized as industrialized, newly industrialized, emerging countries, developing, and least developed. The focus of this chapter is on developing countries as the title suggests. Developing countries are countries facing specific social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities (Fantom & Serajuddin, 2016). In the chapter, however, developing countries are defined as sovereign states that are

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