Chapter 31
A Theoretical Approach to the Adoption of Electronic Resource Management Systems (ERMS) in Nigerian University Libraries

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses a theoretical approach to the adoption of electronic resource management systems in Nigeria university libraries. The nature of electronic resources calls for a special way of managing it thereby the invention and adoption of electronic resource management systems (ERMS). However, observation revealed that Nigerian libraries have yet to largely adopt it. It is therefore necessary to theoretically outline the factors promoting adoption of new technologies, in order for Nigerian libraries to take a cue. This chapter proposes a theoretical approach to the adoption of ERMS in Nigerian libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic resources (also called Digital resources) are quite varied in nature. They may be software programs, or they may consist of text, images, music, cartographic material, sound or video files. The International Standard Bibliographic Description for Electronic Resources (ISBD(ER) (1999) defined electronic resources as materials that are computer-controlled, including materials that require the use of a peripheral (e.g. a CD-ROM player) attached to a computer; the items may or may not be used in the

interactive mode. Electronic resources consist of two features: data (information in the form of numbers, letters, graphics, images, and sound, or a combination thereof) and programs (instructions or routines for performing certain tasks including the processing of data).

In addition, they may be combined to include electronic data and programs such as online services and interactive multimedia (IFLA, 1999; Saur, 1997). Anglo America Cataloguing Rules 2nd edition defined an electronic resource as material encoded for manipulation by a computerized device. This material may require the use of a peripheral directly connected to a computerized device (e.g. CD-ROM drive) or a connection to a computer network (e.g. the Internet). Electronic resources that do not require the use of a computer, (i.e. music compact discs and videodiscs) are not included in this definition. Electronic resources for it nature, requires special management procedure unlike its paper counterparts which required traditional shelving, hence the invention of electronic resources management systems (ERMS).

Electronic Resource Management (ERM) is the practices and software systems used by libraries to keep track of important information about electronic information resources, especially Internet-based resources such as electronic journals, databases, and electronic books. An electronic resource management system (ERMS) is basically designed to assist libraries in managing all the details related to its subscription to electronic contents (Hartnett, Price, Smith, & Barrett, 2010). According to the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (2010), electronic resource management system (ERMS) is software system used primarily by private law firms to help manage online services and get more value from them. Mihlrad (2010) submitted that one common definition of ERM or ERMS is a software module that assists the library in managing all the details related to its subscriptions to electronic content, stressing that electronic resource management systems' aim is to bring together disparate information related to purchasing, managing, and evaluating electronic resources such as journals, e-books, and databases.

An ERMS is not simply a database to collate and record information, but rather it is an active system that interacts with everyone in a firm through online services. It performs three main functions which are: usage monitoring in terms of recording how people use online services; automatic log on and access control, in terms of central control of passwords and seamless access for research; and cost recovery, in terms of improving efficiency of existing process and enabling cost on other services (The British and Irish Association of Law Librarians, 2010). Common elements of an ERMS include vendor/consortia contact information, product life cycle information (e.g., trial dates, subscription dates, license agreements), e-mail reminders or notes, access information (proxy URL, link resolver etc), cost/budget information, MARC records, and reports/usage statistics (Mihlrad, 2010). Libraries that have adopted an ERMS auspicate the need to consolidate information, improve the communication of information to staff and users, track workflow, and provide accurate holdings information efficiently to users as some of the reasons for the adoption (Hartnett et al. 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Electronic resources now forms major part of university libraries' acquisition. Majority of its users now rely mainly on computers to search and retrieve information. Like any other library resources, electronic resources have to be processed and organized in order that users will have quick and easy access as it is the practice for physical books and journals in the library. The advent of electronic resource management system (ERMS) has made the hitherto cumbersome process of keeping track of electronic resources easier and faster. Libraries in the developed world that have fully adopted and implemented this have reported several successes, making their job easier and showing appropriate improvement in the us-

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