Chapter 72
An Assessment of Digital Library Functions and Services in Nigerian Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT

This chapter critically assess digital library functions and services in Nigeria academic libraries. It highlighted the roles of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) that brought about digital libraries. It is a collection of digital contents that is housed electronically and made available to users. The advantages of digital library were also discussed such as improved access, improved information preservation, it improved information sharing, it enhances library functions and services. Nigerian academic libraries has benefited from the enormous benefits of digital library. The chapter stressed that effort should be improved consortium building so as to improve the services Nigerian libraries render to their patrons. The chapter concludes that Digital library has come a long way in Nigeria, and 21st century libraries cannot afford to render services to users without digital contents added to the prints resources. Therefore, Nigeria libraries and information centres must cooperate in a formal consortia building; this will go a long way to reduce the burden of all participating libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology has revolutionised the roles of libraries and it has brought about digital library. Digital library is a library in which the collections are stored in electronic media formats (as opposed to print, microform or other media) and accessible via computers. The electronic content may be stored locally or accessed remotely via computer networks. It is fundamentally a resource that has restructured the intellectual content and services of a traditional library in a digital form.

Digital library is a collection of digital documents or object organized for online access and retrieval by users it is fundamentally a resource that restructures the intellectual content and services of a traditional library in digital form. Digital library consist of digital content are sometimes not necessary text based, they can be audio/video materials. It is a collection of services and information that support users information needs. This information is available directly or indirectly through electronic/digital means.

The advance in ICT has placed librarians in a better position to provide information services to their communities (Nkanu & Okon, 2010) The goal of any library is to acquire, preserve and disseminate information to the users, thereby making the information resource accessible through a electronic format. They further, opined that the trend in digital age has made it mandatory for libraries in Nigeria to develop ways to access and distribute information materials in electronic format effectively using the digital technology available in the 21st century.

DIGITAL LIBRARY DEFINITIONS

There is no definite definition of digital library, this is because the digital library, electronic library and virtual library have been used inter changeable. Electronic library consist of some differences from a digital library and a virtual library, electronic library are electronic materials and services, digital library is made up of digital services and materials that are stored, process and disseminated through an electronic device while virtual library is a composition of both electronic and digital library (Tenant, 1999 cited in Gbaje, 2007)

Borgmam (1999) observed that the term digital library as seen by researchers are content collected on behalf of users while librarians view digital library as institutions or services. Digital libraries have received wide attention in recent years which allows access to digital information from anywhere across the world (Singh, 2011). Digital library have the ability to enable world wide access to a never ending supply of distributed information.

The Digital Library Federation defines digital libraries as:

Organisations that provide the resources, including the specialised staff, to select, structure, offer intellectual access to interpret, distribute, preserve the integrity of, and ensure the persistence overtime of collections of digital works so that they are readily available for use by a defined community or set of communities (Shiri, 2003).

According to Rosenberg (2006) digital library is a library where users access resources by electronic means and information is delivered electronically to users. Singh (2011) enthused that digital evolution

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