Chapter V
Issues, Controversies, and Problems of Cybercafés Located in a University Campus

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ABSTRACT

This chapter takes a look at the use of campus cybercafés as a possible solution to the inadequate or lack of Internet facilities in Nigerian university libraries. It argues that campus cybercafés are most likely for now the avenue whereby their faculty, students, researchers, and other members of the university community can have online access to the world's leading peer-reviewed journals. This is because some of the libraries are yet to have Internet facilities while those that do have, do not have enough to cater for the large population of users. Secondly, these libraries through three or more global initiatives are provided with free online journal access in support of the UN millennium development goals making campus cybercafés partners in the provision of Internet facilities to the university communities in which they are located. The chapter therefore discusses the issues, controversies, and problems of their operations in relation to cyber security in order to know the level of security awareness among their users, identify serious security threats, and to find out the type of anti-virus software used.

INTRODUCTION

A *cybercafé*, according to the definition in Wikipedia is a place where a computer with Internet access can be used for a fee, usually per hour or minute; sometimes it could be un-metered access with a pass for a day or month, and so forth. In some cases, it is true to its name of a regular café

where food and drinks are being served. Although cybercafé as a concept and name was invented by Ivan Pope at the beginning of 1994, Internet cafes are found located world-wide. In the developed world, many people use them when traveling to access Web mail and instant messaging services to keep in touch with family and friends.

In the developing world, cybercafés are the main public access point for getting to the Internet. In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and much of the developing world, the most visible ICT trend is the increasing number of telecenters to combat information poverty. *Telecenters* is the term used to describe a variety of methods for providing access to ICT, which range from cybercafés to libraries to various service points. Telecenters must provide both access to ICT and be accessible to the public (Gebremichael & Jackson, 2006). They are a shared information and communication facility for the provision and expansion of Internet access. Cybercafés are meant to help in reducing the digital divide through their provision of public access computers to members of the society who cannot afford the facilities in their homes. Typically, they offer public access to computers and other telecommunication technologies and provide training with the supplies of some category of business services. Though they may be non-profit, but most often, are commercial and privately owned and operated. They may also in addition sell coffee, tea, and snacks. In India, for instance, they have diffused widely in the past years and are found everywhere. Students are not left out, as those that do not have telecommunication equipment at home often go to these cybercafés for Internet access (Idris, 2004).

Cybercafés are part of an insecure remote network infrastructure. They, like libraries, are also known as multi-user systems (Omodafe & Egarievwe, 2004). Although *cybercafés* are part of an insecure remote network infrastructure, research has corroborated the fact that in developing countries, they serve as the main source of Internet access for the majority of the citizens (Jensen, 2002; Gitta & Ikoja-Odongo, 2003; Beragama, 2004; Mwesigie, 2004; Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Adeya, 2004). A study by Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Adeya (2004) found that academics in Kenyan and Nigerian universities are compelled to seek Internet access in cybercafés and other public places because of the initial investment cost of end-user equipment that limits the ownership of personal computers. Indonesia is another developing country where Idris (2004) reported that since the majority of Indonesians cannot afford individual Internet access, they can only access the Internet from Internet café (cybercafé) and other public Internet access.

In Uganda, cybercafés are a significant means to access the Internet for many, especially in urban areas. There are several cybercafés operating in Kampala and in other big towns that are being used as public Internet access points. Gitta and Ikoja-Odongo (2003) reported that the largest number of respondents to their study saw the cybercafés as very important in providing information services to Ugandans.

In Nigeria, there were about 2,316 cybercafés, with most of them located in Lagos as of February, 2004 according to the then president of the Association of Telecentres and Cybercafé Operators in Nigeria. This was reported in *THE GUARDIAN*, Tuesday, February 10, 2004, on page 41. A cybercafé user survey conducted in Nigeria of cybercafé users, in 12 different districts in Lagos in 14 cybercafés, revealed that a majority 72% of those who responded had/were currently in tertiary education. Their ages range between 18 years old for the youngest and the oldest was 47 years old with the average age of 28 years and 4 months. Male users accounted for 71.8% while female make up the remaining 28.2% (Esselaar & Stavron, 2003). Over the years, there has been a decrease in the cost of Internet access in Nigerian cybercafés while the cost of Internet connectivity remains very high for individuals. The cost of Internet browsing in cybercafés in most parts of the country is now on the average of N100