Chapter 16
ICT Readiness of Higher Institution Libraries in Nigeria

Pereware A. Tiemo
Niger Delta University, Nigeria

Nelson Edewor
Delta State Polytechnic, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This article surveys the Information Communication Technology (ICT) readiness of higher institution libraries in Delta State, Nigeria. By means of questionnaires and observation techniques, data were collected from the higher institution libraries. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data generated. Findings revealed the higher institution libraries ICT demographics, available ICT facilities and equipment, critical service areas automated in these libraries, as well as constraints to ICT use to include poor funding, inadequate skilled manpower, non reliability of electricity supply, inadequate technical support, and poor implementation of policies and lack of maintenance. The study concludes that higher institution libraries in Delta State, Nigeria, are yet to fully embrace ICT in library and information service delivery. Some recommendations that can facilitate the use of ICT in these libraries were also set forth.

INTRODUCTION

Information Communication Technology has been greatly described in several ways. According to Dewatteville and Gilbert (2000) ICT is the acquisition, analysis, manipulation, storage and distribution of information and the design and provision of equipment and software for these purposes. ICT encompasses array of networks, hardware and applications of communication and information creation, management, processing, storage and dissemination. The ICT sector is a gamut of industries and services – internet service provision, telecommunications equipment and services, information technology (IT) equipments

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-2928-8.ch016

and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centers, commercial information providers, network-based information services and other related information and communication activities (Ajayi, 2003).

ICT is central to the development of contemporary society in all ramifications. That every facet of human life is affected by ICT is no longer in doubt – of which the library is not an exception. The use of ICT for library and information service delivery has undergone various level of development. Today the library mission of providing information service and access to information resources is greatly enhanced by the use of ICT. With ICT, these services are taking on new meanings and constructs. Al-Qallaf (2006) summed this up, when he stated that "librarians provide access to eclectic e-collections, create and maintain digital content, support e-learning, provide real time e-reference, negotiate contracts and licensing agreements and struggle with the economies of electronic information". With Internet protocols as platforms, libraries are now virtual – available anytime, anywhere, without brick and mortar physical structure, but are able to inform educate, create, store, and process data/information.

Akintunde (2004) succinctly captured this, 'libraries worldwide since the last two decades have undergone significant metamorphosis from a purely traditional modeled manual service delivery system to a more dynamic technologically driven system …. Like a cyclone the technology environment has enveloped the library and is taking it to unprecedented heights in knowledge acquisition, management and communication'.

From the foregoing, the relevance and benefits of ICT in higher institution's libraries cannot be over-emphasized. As new technologies emerge all over the globe; the question that easily comes to mind is; what are some of the technologies available in Nigerian higher institutions' libraries? To what extent are libraries ICT driven? What is the state of existing ICT facilities? What are the factors enhancing ICT usage or impeding ICT utilization? Research on these and other related questions will help academic, policy makers, librarians, professionals and researchers in planning and developing effective strategies for implementation and utilization of ICT in library and information services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A search of the literature dealing with state of ICT facilities in higher institutions libraries revealed several studies. Jones (1989) surveyed three university libraries in the United States. The result showed that participating libraries have On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) with state of the Art ICT facilities. A similar study involving academic Libraries in Wisconsin by Palmine (1994) showed that only cataloguing, acquisition, reference and circulation functions of the participating libraries were automated.

On the African scene, Magara (2002) provided a detailed report on the state of ICT in Ugandan libraries. By means of a questionnaire, he sought to find out the number of computers, level of automation and types of software in use. The results showed that although most participants had computers and software packages for library and information service delivery; responses indicated a low level of ICT utilization. Isaac (2002) examined the level of ICT implementation and use in South Africa. He found that insufficient funds, lack of infrastructure, high telephone and internet cost are amongst the factors affecting effective ICT implementation in Tertiary Institutions. The Scenario in Botswana academic libraries was greatly captured in Ojedokun and Owolabi (2003). They reported the low level of Internet access competence (18%) among teaching and research staff of universities in Botswana. Their study was aimed at determining the level of use of Internet for teaching and research activities by university of Botswana academics. Kavulya (2004) also studied ICT use in selected university librar-