

Chapter 12

Academic Libraries in Nigeria and the Challenges of Application of Information and Communication Technologies

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is one of the developing countries where many challenges are affecting the management of its academic libraries, especially in the area of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) application. Academic libraries are libraries in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) that are established to provide information resources and information services in support of the research, teaching, learning, and community development objectives of the institutions. However, despite the overwhelming influence of ICT, the information superhighway, and the open access initiatives across the globe, the extent of ICT adoption, application, and utilization for the provision of information services in Nigerian academic libraries is nothing to cheer. This chapter, which adopts a descriptive approach, examines the following: conceptual explanation of ICT and the case for its application and the state of ICT and the challenges of ICT application in Nigerian academic libraries, with recommendations on the way forward.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries, which are found in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) such as universities, polytechnics, mono-technics, colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, institutes of technology, and the likes play strategic roles in the evolution and development of nations. They are integral part of tertiary institutions that are shouldered with the responsibility of taking care of the literature, information and research needs of members of the scholarly community through the application of information management principles. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) describes them as ‘the heart of tertiary education’ with the responsibility of facilitating the accomplishment of institutional mission statements and specific goals. For decades, these libraries are known as reliable source of information for the academia. Their mandate is to provide information resources and information services to users in support of their parent institution’s mission and goals in the areas of research, teaching, learning, and development. Their functions are seen in research, human resources development, documentation and management of knowledge assets, preservation of culture and indigenous knowledge, promotion of reading habits, provision of information materials and knowledge resources, and above all the satisfaction of the information needs of users such as undergraduates, postgraduate students, scholars, researchers and administrative personnel for the development of the education sector in particular and the advancement of humanity in general.

According to Tella (2009), there is no doubt about the fact that significant changes have taken place in academic libraries the world over due to the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in automated cataloguing, circulation systems, online information retrieval, electronic document delivery, and CDROM databases. Meanwhile, with these developments in ICT and other associated digital systems, academic libraries in Nigeria started integrating the tech-

nologies in their operations and services in order to retain their status as relevant and reliable sources of information, as well as to continue attracting the interest of information users. However, several factors have been acting as impediments to these efforts. There are such cases in recent literature and other scholarly publications, thus affecting the provision of information services. This chapter would therefore examine the concept of ICT and the case for its application in academic libraries, the state of ICT application in Nigerian academic libraries, the challenges affecting the application of ICT in Nigerian academic libraries and the way forward.

CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATION OF ICT AND THE CASE FOR ITS APPLICATION IN NIGERIAN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

ICT has been defined by various scholars from different perspectives. According to De Waterville 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. It is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and create, disseminate, store, and manage information (Blurton, n.d.). To Nwachukwu (2007), ICT is the application of computers and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. It is seen as the aggregate of computers, telecommunication gadgets, multimedia resources, and other electronic technologies that are applied and utilized in the total process of information management and dissemination. The components of ICT include the computer systems (hardware and software, input and output devices); storage media such as compact disk read only memory (CD-ROMs), Universal Serial Bus (USB) drives; and telecommunication equipment like telephone, facsimile transmission, services of the Internet, Web 2.0 and

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