

# USE OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES BY UNDERGRADUATES OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, ABEOKUTA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

Electronic information resources now serve as important sources of information to students and lecturers in Nigerian universities. This study aims to investigate the usage of electronic information resources by undergraduates of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria. Using the descriptive survey research approach, the simple random sampling was used to select participants from among the undergraduate students from 200 to 500 levels that came to use the library within the study period. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire tagged ‘‘Usage of Electronic information resources’’. A total of 200 questionnaires were administered, of which 184 were duly filled giving a response rate of 92%. The findings revealed that 92.4% of the respondents had used electronic information resources, with 51.8% of them being frequent users. The major electronic resources used by students were internet search engines, e- lecture notes and e-books and they use it for completing class assignments, to obtain course related materials and to keep abreast of latest development in their field. The main access points were home/hostels and university e learning centres; only 31.2% of respondents had used the library to access electronic resources and 84.9% of them were satisfied with the library electronic resources. The major barriers hindering effective use of electronic resources were insufficient skills, difficulty in finding relevant information and frequent power outage. Training students in information searching skills by the library; the provision of networked computers in Departments and Colleges and lecturers giving assignments that require use of electronic resources would increase the use of electronic information resources among undergraduates.

**Subject Keywords:** University library, Electronic Information Resources, undergraduates, Usage, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB)

### Introduction

Information is key to the wellbeing of humanity and stand as the major determinant of decision making. It could be equated to other economic resources such as capital and labour in which an increased investment leads to enhanced productivity. Okiki (2011) posited that information is the pivot on which the survival of any society rests. Nowadays, information could be accessed through a range of information and communication technology tools. Information and communication technology has transformed all human activities dependent on information, particularly in the area of poverty reduction, healthcare delivery and education. It has made a significant impact on teaching and learning in higher education and has improved the flow of information to academic communities. It has changed the philosophy of information from unitary to global access. The technological advancement has availed librarians the options of handling varied information sources conveniently and effortlessly.

Electronic information resources consists of information resources provided in electronic formats such as internet, CDROM databases, e-books e-journals, Online database, Online Public Access Catalogues, and other computer –based electronic networks. Electronic information resources are now a major resource in every university library and it has significantly transformed information handling and management in academic environments and in University libraries in particular. Ellis and Oldman (2005) posited that the use of electronic resources has availed researchers and students access to global information resources, particularly the Internet for their scholarly intercourse. Electronic scientific information resources have great significance in the advancement of teaching and learning. It has radically impacted the field of Library and Information Science to such an extent that access to information is now at fingertips. It has afforded users the opportunity of staying off-library and accessing e-resources from diverse ends. Sonkar et al. (2014) listed the merits of electronic resources as follows: it can be access from any part of the globe without any geographical and time limitations, can be subscribed through consortia/ publisher, update, modification and alteration could easily be effected, availability in various files and formats immediately they are uploaded on the server saving time and money. It further posited that electronic resources can be searched, browsed , accessed, copied, downloaded fast and customized, Linking feature facilitates link within the documents as well as outside of the documents, many users can use electronic resources simultaneously, and it is possible to monitor the usage of electronic information resources to some extend. Emphasizing this importance, Fidel et al. (1999) posited that “innumerable types of information, in a large variety of containers and in many different locations, are all available in one place”

Electronic information resources have gained wide acceptability among university scholars due to its convenience, multi-access capability, unrestricted access to information, ability to browse the Web and timeliness. Thus, university libraries in their quest to fulfil their role as information reservoir in support of teaching, learning and research are increasingly acquiring

electronic resources for optimum use of their staff and students. Undergraduate students' and other members of the academic community now have access to diversified formats of information such as print, electronic, and multimedia, leading to a greater need for research assistance from librarians to achieve improved access facilities for information retrieval, and prefer at any point in time, access to a vast array of information from where selection could be made. The services of information specialists are needed for users of library to make optimum use of available resources and to locate needed information.

### Statement of the problem

The mission of academic libraries is to support learning and research activities, stimulate creativity and intellectual development and acquisition of knowledge. The Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria (FUNAAB) library in living up to this expectation has devoted a substantial part of its budget to libraries' collection. The library has an electronic library where students could have access to electronic resources such as CDROM databases, e-books, e-journals, online database, and Online Public Access Catalogues. The understanding of users need, perceptions of the usefulness, satisfaction and constraint would guide library in building appropriate and relevant electronic resources collection. According to Buckland (2003), "library services ought to be user-centered and not data-centered." and that: "Only when substantially more research and development has been completed from the library user's perspective can the digital library environment begin to have the look and feel of good library service. Zhang et al. (2011) posited that the understanding by producers and providers of electronic resources of users' demands is vital to improve the efficiency and value of the utilization of e-resources. Electronic resources are very costly to acquire especially considering the diminished budget of university libraries in developing countries. Premised on the fore-going, gaining an understanding on the extent to which these resources are being utilized by library clientele is of critical importance to justify the huge investment in their acquisition. It is against this background that the study seeks to investigate the use of electronic information resources by students of FUNAAB, Ogun, Nigeria.

### Objectives

The following are the objectives guiding the study:

- to assess the level of computer proficiency of undergraduate students of FUNAAB
- to ascertain students' level of use of electronic information resources
- to find out the purpose of use of electronic information resources
- to find out the location of students access to electronic information resources
- to find out the students' perceived quality of NAL electronic information resources used
- to determine students' constraints in accessing and using electronic information resources

### **Profile of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria**

The Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), was established by the Federal government of Nigeria in 1988 as one of the three specialized Universities of Agriculture in Nigeria. Presently, the institution has nine Colleges each headed by a Dean. These colleges are the College of Plant Science and Crop Production (COLPLANT), College of Engineering (COLENG), College of Natural Science (COLNAS), College of Environmental Resources Management (COLERM), College of Animal Science and Livestock Production (COLANIM), College of Food Science and Human Ecology (COLFHEC), College of Veterinary Medicine (COLVET), College of Agricultural Management and Rural Development (COLAMRUD), and College of Management Science (COLMAS). The Universities Research Fair organized by the National Universities Commission (the apex body regulating university education in Nigeria) in 2004 and 2005, rated FUNAAB as the best research University in Nigeria. The Web ranking of Universities of 2012 placed FUNAAB in the second position among universities in Nigeria, and 35th in Africa, while the last Web ranking of Universities released in 2015 placed FUNAAB in the sixth position among universities in Nigeria.

The FUNAAB Library was named 'after its pioneer Vice-Chancellor Professor N.O. Adedipe as 'Nimbe Adedipe Library. The library commenced operation with print collections inherited from its predecessors, the defunct Federal University of Technology, Abeokuta (FUTAB), and the College of Science and Technology of the University of Lagos, Abeokuta (COSTAB). The library has a special section called the "electronic library" where students and staff of the institution could access the library electronic resources.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Several studies have dealt with the use of electronic resources among postgraduate students and lecturers in universities and other tiers of tertiary education, but there is paucity of such studies among undergraduates in Nigeria. The users of electronic resources are often confronted with more resources than they can effectively handle. To address this problem of information overload, skill is required to locate and verify the quality of information obtained from electronic resources. Training is also essential for optimum use of search tools and standardized filtering techniques to be able to identify high-quality information resources.

Tenopir (2003) reviewed available literature on usage of electronic resources from 1995 to 2003, and concluded that electronic resources have become widely adopted in the academic environment, and that users in different disciplines have distinct usage pattern.

Crawford (2006) studied the use of electronic information services and information literacy at Glasgow Caledonian University and found that students used electronic information resources for their academic pursuits, communication, current awareness, and entertainment. The use of electronic information services by undergraduate students at the University of Namibia's Northern Campus was assessed by Ndinoshiho (2010). The findings revealed that majority of the students used the internet, but e-databases were significantly underutilized.

The students used electronic resources to obtain academic information and current awareness, and the major constraints faced were the shortage of computers, unreliable internet connection, and lack of skills. The access and utilization of electronic resources by students at the East African School of Library and Information Science, Makerere University, Uganda was conducted by Okello-Obura and Magara (2008). The respondents mentioned that they derived a lot of benefits from electronic resources as they were able to gain access to a wider range of information and that access to quality information improved their academic performance.

Okiki and Ashiru (2011) studied use of electronic information resources by Nigerian students and found that the students were motivated to use electronic resources for their research projects, gain quick access to information and to search for new things. The major problems encountered by respondents in gaining access to and use electronic resources were slow internet connectivity, frequent incessant power outage and too few computers with internet facilities. Adeniran (2013) in her study of usage of electronic resources at Redeemers University in Nigeria found that even though respondents were aware of the different types of electronic information resources available in the university library, their use rate of these resources was low. The factors that impede effective utilization of electronic resources were large mass of irrelevant information, the need to filter the results from search, download delay, failure to find information and inadequate or lack of search skills. The study concluded that electronic resources has impacted positively on the academic performances of the undergraduates, but recommended the need for them to acquire more skills in the use of electronic resources.

Gakibayo *et al.* (2013) examined students' utilization of electronic information resources in Mbarara University Library, Uganda. The study found that the use of electronic resources was constrained by lack of computer and information literacy skills, inadequate number of computers and slow internet connectivity. The frequency of use of these resources indicated that the university would have to do a lot to improve on electronic resources use in the institution.

Tariq and Zia (2014) carried out a survey to find out the use of electronic information resources by the students of Faculty of Science, University of Karachi, Pakistan. The findings showed that they used electronic resources for class assignments and to get updates about their specialty. The main barriers to access and use were slow network connection, power failure, viruses, and subscription issues. Furthermore, the users also need to get trained for an effective use of these resources.

## Methodology

The descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study. The undergraduate students from 200 level and above of Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) that used the library within the study period constituted the population for the study. The fresh students (100 Level) were excluded from the study due to their newness and inexperience in the university system. The simple random sampling was adopted in selecting

the undergraduates as they come to make use of the ‘Nimbe Adedipe Library. The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire tagged ‘ ‘ Use of Electronic Information Resources’’. It was developed based on a review of literature; reviewed by two experts in Library and Information Science and pretested with twenty undergraduates (excluded from the final study) of FUNAAB.

The questionnaire was administered on 200 undergraduates as they visited the library, and the completed questionnaire was collected back from them before they leave the library. The number of questionnaire returned that were duly filled by the student was 184 giving the overall response rate of 92%. The data generated was analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages.

### Findings and Discussion

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	100	54.4
Female	81	44.0
No Response	3	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
15-19	44	23.9
20-24	92	50.0
25-29	40	21.7
30 and above	3	1.6
No Response	5	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Level of Study</b>		
200	36	17.6
300	45	24.5
400	39	21.2
500	61	33.2
No Response	3	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Colleges</b>		
COLNAS	38	20.7
COLAMRUD	12	6.5
COLERM	14	7.6
COLPLANT	25	13.6
COLFHEC	30	16.3
COLANIM	32	17.4
COLENG	6	3.3
COLMAS	18	9.8
COLVET	6	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>

From table 1 above, of the 184 participants, 100(54.4%) were male, while 81 (44.0%) were female. The age distribution of the participants shows that 92 (50%) were in the age bracket of 20 to 24years, and those in the range of 15-19 years constituted 23.9%; while those from 30 years and above (1.6%) are the least represented. The 500 level students ranked highest with 61(32%), in spite of the fact that students in COLNAS do not get up to 500 level but graduate at 400 level. This was followed by 300 level students 45 (24.5%) while the least represented were those in 200 levels with 36 (19.6%). COLNAS was the most represented college with 38(20.7%) undergraduates while COLANIM and COLENG each have the least number of participants 6(3.3%).

Table 2. Undergraduates computer proficiency

Rating	Frequency	%
Excellent	23	12.5
Very Good	58	31.5
Good	73	39.7
Average	20	10.9
Poor	6	3.26
No Response	4	2.17
Total	184	100.0

To be able to effectively use the ever expanding volume of information in electronic formats, students should have the skills to use computer. The self-rating of Computer Proficiency by the participants in Table 2 shows that 73 (39.7%) of respondents perceived themselves to be good in the use of computer, 58(31.5%) of the respondents felt that they have a very good skill in computer while only 23(12.5%) rated themselves excellent in their computer skill. Twenty respondents (10.9%) rated themselves as average while an insignificant proportion of 6 (3%) of the respondents rated themselves poor in computer use. If we pool together the respondents that indicated Good, Very good and Excellent together, then 154 ( % ) of respondents rated themselves as very good in use of computer.

Table 3: Use of Electronic Information Resources by undergraduates of FUNAAB

Use	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	170	92.4
No	14	7.6
Total	184	100.0

In response to the question ‘Do you use electronic information resources?’, majority of the respondents 170 (92.4%) indicated the use while only a few of them 14 (7.6%) do not use electronic resources (Table 3). It is noteworthy that ten of the respondents that rated themselves poor in computer proficiency indicated non use of electronic resources.

That majority of the students of FUNAAB frequently use electronic information resources corroborates the findings of Egberongbe (2011) on students of University of Lagos, Nigeria and Tariq and Zia (2014) on students of University of Karachi, Pakistan that found that most students used electronic resources.

Table 4: Frequency of use of electronic information resources

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	30	17.7
Once in two days	16	9.4
Once in week	42	24.7
Occasionally	82	48.2
Total	170	100.0

Those that mentioned using electronic resources were asked to indicate the frequency of use. Table 4 indicates the respondents that used electronic resources occasionally were in the majority 82 (48.2 %). Forty two respondents (24.7%) used electronic information resources once in a week, while 17.6% mentioned using it daily. If use of electronic resources daily, once in two days and weekly are pooled together to represent frequent used, then, more than half of respondents 88 (51.8%) frequently used electronic resources.

However, considering the importance of electronic resources to students' academic attainment, the percentage (51.8%) of those using electronic resources frequently was low. In a similar vein, Gakibayo and Okello-Obura (2013) shows that students use electronic information resources once in a month while Mostafa (2013) indicates that the respondents access electronic resources only when they find it necessary.

Table 5. Type of Electronic information resources used

EIR Type	Frequency	%
Search engines such as Google	157	92.4
Electronic journals	26	15.3
Electronic books	71	41.8
Electronic databases	34	20.0
E-Theses and Dissertations	8	4.7
E-lecture notes	125	73.5
E-newspapers	28	16.5
E-conference proceedings	5	3.0
NUC Virtual Library of Nigeria	4	2.4

Table 5 presents the use of different types of electronic resources by the respondents. It indicates that 92.4% of students used internet search engines, followed by e-lecture notes (73.5%), e books (41.8%) and electronic databases (20.0%). The electronic resources least utilized were conference proceedings (3.0%) and NUC Virtual Library of Nigeria (2.4%).

Table 6: Purpose of use of electronic information Resources

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To complete class assignment	123	72.4
For research purposes	66	38.8
To obtain course related information/study materials	103	60.6
Recommended by my lecturers	58	34.1
For seminar/oral class presentation	32	18.8
To update knowledge/keep abreast of latest development	74	43.5
Entertainment	15	8.8
Leisure	26	15.3

In response to the question on purpose of use of e-resources (Table 6), the highest number of respondents 123(72.4%) were using EIR to complete class assignments, followed by 103(60.6%) that were using it to obtain course related information/study materials. Seventy four (43.5%) respondents to update knowledge/keep abreast of latest development while 66 (38.4%) were using e resources for research purposes. Those using electronic resources for entertainment (8.8%) and leisure (15.3%) were the least. That students use electronic resources mainly for their assignment has been pointed out by previous authors (Tarid and Zia, 2014; Shetty et al., 2015).

Table 7: Access points of electronic information resources

Sources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
University ICT centre	68	40.0
University library	53	31.2
College/Department	13	7.7
Internet café	17	10.0
Home/hostels	124	73.0

The data in Table 7 indicate that main access points of electronic resources was home/hostels (73.0%), and University ICT centres 68 (40.0%).The university library was ranked in the third place and was in use by 53 (31.2%) respondents for access to the e-resources . The least used points of access by the respondents were Colleges/departments (7.7%) and internet cafes (10.0%).

Though, most students (92%) had used electronic resources, but it is disturbing that only 31% of them had used the electronic resource in NAL library. However the finding is in line with the report of Ndinoshiho (2010) who found that though most undergraduates at the University of Namibia's Northern Campus used internet resources, but the library e-resources were significantly under-utilized. It also buttressed the findings of Omosekejimi *et al* (2015) that the undergraduates of the Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun, Warri,

Nigeria had very high level of awareness of the different types of electronic information resources available in the university library but their usage rate of these resources was low. The low access to electronic resources at the departments and colleges is a pointer to the paucity of infrastructure for access. It could also be due to the fact that students are always engaged in classrooms and laboratory work in their department and colleges and as such do not have time to spare for accessing electronic resources from these points.

Table 8: Students perception of electronic resources of Nimbe Adedipe Library

Quality	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	03	5.7
Very Good	22	41.5
Good	20	37.7
Average	6	11.3
Poor	2	3.8
Total	53	100.0

The students that had used the university library e resources were asked to assess the quality of electronic resources in 'Nimbe Adedipe Library. Table 8 indicates that majority of the respondents (41.5%) rated NAL e resources as Very good, while about 37.7% indicated Good. The combination of those that rated the electronic resources as Excellent, Very good and Good indicated 45( ) out of 53(84.9%) was satisfied with NAL e resources.

Table 9: Devices used by students to access electronic information resources

Device	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Desktop	71	41.8
Laptop	131	77.1
Mobile phones	65	38.2
I pad	15	8.8

The data in Table 9 shows that majority of the respondents used their laptops (77.1%) to access electronic resources, followed by 41.8% that used desktop computers while 38.2% used mobile phones.

Table 10: Formal Training on electronic information resources accessing and usage

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	101	59.4
No	69	40.6
Total	170	100.0

Table 10 indicates that 101 respondents (59.4%) had formal training on how to use e-resources as against 69(40.6%) that did not receive formal training.

Table 11: Need for Training /Retraining on electronic information resources usage

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	137	80.6
No	33	19.4
Total	170	100.0

The need for training/retraining on how to maximise the use of e-resources was indicated by majority of the respondents (80.6%) while a few of them (19.4%) did not want to be trained in accessing e resources (Table 11). It is worth noting that over 88 respondents that had formal training still indicated the need for further training in the use of electronic resources. However, it is not clear why 18 of those that had no training still indicated that they do not have need for training in use of electronic resources.

Table12: Constraints to access and use of electronic information resources

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Limited access to internet point	36	21.2
Time consuming and waste a lot of time	27	15.9
Slow internet speed	38	22.4
Frequent power outage	42	24.7
Insufficient skill to retrieve needed information	65	38.2
Non availability of resources relevant to my need	28	7.76
Information overload	37	21.8
The use of e-resources distracts one from doing other works	21	12.4
High costs of accessing electronic resources	18	10.6
Lack of time	43	25.3
Difficulty in finding relevant information	56	33.0
The library staff are not cooperative to facilitate easy use	15	8.8
Some full texts require subscription or payment	37	21.8

The respondents were requested to indicate the constraints faced in the use of electronic resources. The most common constraint in Table 11 was insufficient skill to retrieved needed information cited by 65 (38.2%) of respondents. Next was difficulty in finding relevant information mentioned by 56 (33.0%) respondents, lack of time to access electronic information resources (25.3%) and frequent power outage by 42(24.7%) respondents. The other constraints mentioned by over 20% of respondents were slow internet speed (22.4); information overload (21.8), limited access to an internet point (21.2 %). That insufficient

skills was a major problem supports the finding of Ajayi et al. (2014) that inadequate skills was one of the major factors inhibiting effective use of electronic information resources by students of Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State. Power outage has been identified as one of the most encountered barriers in several studies that have examined impediments to use of internet (Okiki, 2011).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study found that the usage of electronic information resources is widespread among the undergraduates. However, only about half of the students are frequent users, and the students used mainly their laptops and desktops to access electronic resources mainly from home/hostels, while only a few of them had used the library to gain access. The students used e resources for completing their class assignments, to get course related materials and to update knowledge. Lack of skills, difficulty in finding relevant information, lack of time and frequent power outage were the major factors militating against effective use of electronic information resources

#### **Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made:**

There should be more awareness programmes by the university and the library in particular to market the different types of electronic information resources available in the university library. The library should put in place strategies that will promote and, monitor on a regular basis the use of electronic resources by members of the university community.

The university and the library should make effort to organise more in depth training for effective use of electronic resources by students. Though, information about the library electronic resources is presently included in the use of library which is a compulsory course for all students, however, the teaching needs to be made more practical. The course should not only focus on how students should locate electronic resources, but should also include how they can use electronic resources to attain their academic goals.

The university lecturers should be involved in creating an awareness of the importance of library electronic resources to their learning. That should encourage the students to use electronic resources by giving those assignments that will compel them to use electronic resources in the library.

The University should install networked computers in sufficient numbers in departments and faculties so that students could also use these avenues to access electronic resources. It will also make it possible for the lecturers to be involved in the impartation of skills for accessing electronic resources on the students.

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