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**Acquisition and Provision of Access to Electronic Resources: Challenges of Federal University Libraries in the Northcentral State of Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to identify the methods of acquisitions and provision of access to electronic resources: challenges of Federal University Libraries in the Northcentral State of Nigeria. A qualitative research method was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of fourteen (14) respondents which include all Federal University Librarians seven (7) and E-resources Acquisition Librarians Seven (7). Purposive sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondents, structured focus groups interview was the instrument used for data collection, data collected was analyzed using narrative analysis. The study revealed that subscription and purchase are the major methods of acquisition of electronic resources; while Internet connectivity and OPAC/library website are the facilities used for the provision of access to electronic resources. However, inadequate budget allocation, high cost of the subscription fee, unreliable power supply, inadequate network computers, poor network access, and non-existence of off-campus access to university subscriptions are the challenges experienced by the libraries understudy in the acquisition and provision of access to electronic resources. The study recommends that University Librarians should choose co-operative acquisition and resource sharing to reduce the cost of subscription and manage a tight budget, improve their internet bandwidth and special software like SFX should be provided in the libraries to alleviate the problem of overlapping of the same title by providers.*

**Keywords:** Electronic resources, University Libraries, Access, Acquisition

**Introduction**

The emergence of electronic resources has tremendously transformed the handling and management of information in academic environments and University Libraries in particular. According to Ternenge and Keshimenna (2019), electronic resources are library information materials that are electronic form which include electronic books, electronic newspapers,

electronic journals, as well as internet resources, they are an integral part of electronic libraries and stand as vital academic resources that support teaching, learning and research. They support all disciplines in the university and account for more than half of the library scholarly acquisition budget.

The term „e-resources“ is an acronym used for electronic resources or electronic information resources. These are collections of information in electronic or digital format that is accessed on an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, computer, etc. They have published resources in electronic versions or formats such as encyclopedias, pamphlets, e-books, e-journals, databases, etc. The major advantage of e-resources is that they can be simultaneously accessed ubiquitously around the world by a great number of users, easy retrieval of the required information within a short period, it provides 24/7 access services and can be downloaded and save time (Maware & Sai, 2018 and Bhuvanewari et al 2017). Electronic resources and databases are invaluable tools for studying, learning, and research; they have an edge over the traditional print-based media they contain current information, offer advanced search capability, greater storage flexibility, and enable access to information without the time and location constraints.

Acquisition is the technical process of identifying, ordering, receiving, and paying for information resource items after the intellectual decision to purchase an item has been made. Acquisition of e-resources is the process of tracking, recording, and reviewing the license and business terms and investigating variable pricing ranges. It is based on the need assessment of the library clientele, usage statistics analysis, and demographic projections and it is normally constrained by budgetary limitation.

Providing access to e-resources starts with the (signed) e-resources license because it is there where the expectations of the institution and those of the e-resources provider meet. Geoff, 2009 indicated that electronic resources license dictates much of what follows as information and activities filter through the access-provision system. Preceding the commitment of both parties to a license agreement is the process of considering what our institution needs, when we need it, how we need it and for whom we need it. The meeting of our needs and the provider’s offering is not always smooth acquaintance but ultimately, when we reach an agreement we are declaring that the negotiation is over and the license subsequently influences the scope and methods of our provision of access. Yarima (2015) who cited (Pinfield, 2001), Arunanchalam (2005), MacGraw-Hill (2003), and Breeding (2004), noted that provision of access to electronic resources can be done through Z39.50, open archives initiative protocol for metadata harvesting, linking to full text through digital object identifier, federated search, open URL-Based link Resolvers, links from the online catalogues and E-journal Resources Locators.

University library is a repository of information resources in any format (printed, CD-ROM, non-printed, online and electronic). It is an integral part of the educational system whose primary function is to serve users like faculty, students, staff, and researchers. The University library is attached to a higher education institution which serves two complementary purposes to support

the school curriculum and the research, teaching, and learning of the university community. The university library has a central role „to provide collections and staff resources in support of teaching, research, services and public outreach“.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Electronic resources are influencing the university libraries' collection because of their feature such as multiple searching, providing global communication, storage and database maintenances and easy retrieval of information require within a short period, etc. Libraries and information centers that fail to adopt appropriate information technology in their services and functions may cease to function and perhaps close down (Ternenge and Kashimana, 2019). With the overwhelming advantage of the online information resources, the users of the resources still experience challenges with access to the resources as stated by (Ugwu and Orsu, 2017) who cited (Sohail & Ahmed 2017, Doramola 2016; Omeluzor, Akibu & Akinwoye 2016; Omeluzer, 2015) identified poor information technology infrastructure development, lack of knowledge on how to use E-journals, delay of downloaded articles, inadequate search skills, inaccessibility of some e-resources and difficulties in navigating through e-resources, insufficient bandwidth resulting to slow internet speed and poor network services, frequent power failure or unstable power supply, high cost of subscription and financial constraints, etc.

The 21st-century teaching, learning, and research purpose are promoted by academic libraries in universities through the use of information and communication technology, this is mostly observed in universities where library users are web savvy they normally prefer the fasted way that would lead to satisfaction. The development of ICT posed challenges to the academic libraries in an attempt to meet the information needs of their users in the digital era as Access control (ID login, IP authentication, and password licensing policies), personnel & workload, overlapping coverage of the same title by multiple vendors, cost implications of e-resources subscription and other collection development issues (print and digital), funding/financial constraints, high cost of internet connectivity, high cost of access/subscription (Uguwu, 2017 and Omolola, 2012). The above study clearly shows that there is a paucity of research in the areas of Acquisition and provision of Access to E-resources; Challenges of Federal University Libraries in North Central State in Nigeria. This study intends to fill the gap.

### **Objective of the study**

The objectives of this study are to;

1. Identify the methods of acquisition of electronic resources in the Federal University Libraries in the North Central State of Nigeria.
2. Determine the mode of access and kinds of information communication technology facilities provided for accessing electronic resources in the Federal University Libraries in the North Central State of Nigeria.

3. Identify the challenges experienced by the Federal University Libraries in the acquisition and provision of access to electronic resources in the North Central State of Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

### **Electronic resources**

Adelek and Nwalo (2017) defined electronic resources in their study of availability, use, and constraints to the use of electronic information resources by postgraduates as resources in which information is stored electronically and which are accessible through electronic systems and networks. Electronic resources are now used to supplement printed information resources in university libraries, these electronic resources are e-books, e-journals, online databases, electronic conferences, and proceeding and CD-ROM databases. Online databases commonly used in academic libraries are EBSCOHOST, AGORA, Science Direct, Scopus, Semantic Scholar, HINARI, MEDLINE, JSTOR, and OARE.

The Library of Congress collection policy, (2008) identifies four categories of electronic resources in the library as; Acquiree-resources that are received through license or acquisition processes as gifts, copyright deposit, exchange, ISSN request; Collect e-resources that library have permanent ownership, Link e-resources that can be accessed remotely through library's web resources and Archive E-resources that are permanent digital repository managed and maintained by the library

**Mode of Access to Electronic Resources** - Access to electronic resources is obtained either on-campus or off-campus or multiple (On-campus/off campus) locations, the mode of access to the e-resources are search engines, meta-search engines, information gateways, subject directories, and scholarly databases using electronic devices such as a desktop computer (office computer), laptops, pads and/or tablets, internet café in the campus, and mobile phone (Akuffo & Budu, 2019). Accessibility is the ability to locate, gain entry and use e-resources that are physically or electronically provided to obtain specific and accurate information. Facilities available to access and use the e-resources are internet connectivity, photocopying machines/scanner, OPACs, computer LAN/internet café, Hotspots/WI-FI (Mwantimwa & Elia, 2017). Electronic resources are accessible through the use of a computer; including electronic data available by; Remote access and direct access (fixed media). In other words, Remote access (e-resource) refers to the use of e-resources via a computer network (AACR 2, 2002). Direct access (electronic resources) refers to the use of e-resource via carrier eg, discs/disk, cassettes, cartridges designed to be inserted into a computerised device or its auxiliary equipment. The more accessible information resources are, the more likely they are to be used. Readers tend to use information resources that require the least effort to access.

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### **University Libraries' Acquisition of electronic resource**

An acquisition is a prime activity for the collection development of electronically generated resources. It is the process of obtaining and receiving physical library resources or access to online resources. Okogwu & Achebe (2018) also added that the acquisition of e-resource means purchasing of access rights; no single resources are owned by or housed at the library rather these are accessed through a remote database. Once an individual selector or selection committee has chosen a resource for the library's collection, the standard acquisition process of locating and acquiring the resource takes place. The most effective way to provide access to e-books and e-journals in university libraries is through subscription to online databases which can be accessed through the internet.

### **Challenges of Academic Libraries in Acquisition and Provision of Access to Electronic Resources**

The major issue among academic librarians is the provision of quality services in academic libraries. Users see the library more in terms of the provision and access to quality service, not just a physical place. However, with the provision of quality services academic libraries are faced with numerous challenges in acquisition and provision of access to electronic resources such as information explosion and e-resources complexities, lack of funding and budgetary constraints, lack of institutional policies, copyright and intellectual property right, lack of information and communication infrastructures, technological obsolescence, human error and vandalism, lack of searching skills and e-resources statistics, technological upgrading, challenges of how to apply usage statistics to a cancellation decision and poor network access (Sejane, 2017, Agim 2015, Okogwu & Achebe 2018).

Vasanth (2016) and John (2009) identify the challenges of acquisition and access to electronic resources as; Legal aspects which are related to copyright (intellectual property rights and plagiarism), Changing nature version and update to available software and hardware; Expensive funding of the digital project, Technical expertise and technophobia due to inadequate skills in information technology, Technological obsolesces due to continuous change in computer hardware and software, multiple users identification/Access control ( ID login and password, IP authentication and Licensing policies), technological requirements for users to access the resources, canceling print sources, organizing and integrating, training and education of staff and users of electronic resources. Other problems include restrictions in the proxy server to prevent excessive downloading by robots.

### **Research Methodology**

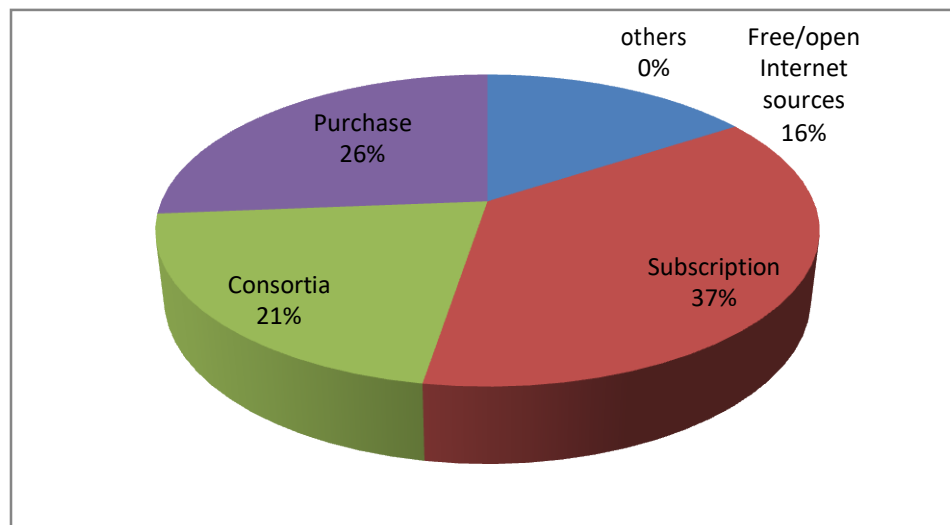
The qualitative research methodology was adopted for the study. The target populations of the study are seven (7) University Librarians and seven (7) Electronic resources Acquisition Librarian fourteen (14) respondents from all the seven Federal universities in the North Central State of Nigeria these are, University of Jos, University of Abuja, Federal University of

Technology Minna, University of Agriculture Makurdi, Federal University of Ilorin, Federal University Laifuya and Federal University Lokoja. Purposive sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondent which was the University Librarian and E-resources acquisition Librarian, the choice members of the population to participate in the study are only a limited number of people that can serve as primary data sources, this technique was chosen because it allows the researcher to select a sample to satisfy a predetermined criterion (Aku & Akuezuilo,2013). The researcher believes in the context of this study, that they were in the best position to respond adequately to the interview questions posed regarding the acquisition and provision of access to e-resources and its challenges. A Structure focus group interview was used as an instrument for data collection. The structured interview included a sequence of questions that enabled the researcher to gather data from the respondents for the research under study. The structured interview was to identify the methods of acquisition, provision of access to e-resources, and its challenges; the structured questioning technique was used to collect data and analyzed using narrative analysis.

### Data Analyses and Presentation

This section presents the result and findings of the study

#### Methods of Acquisition of Electronic Resources



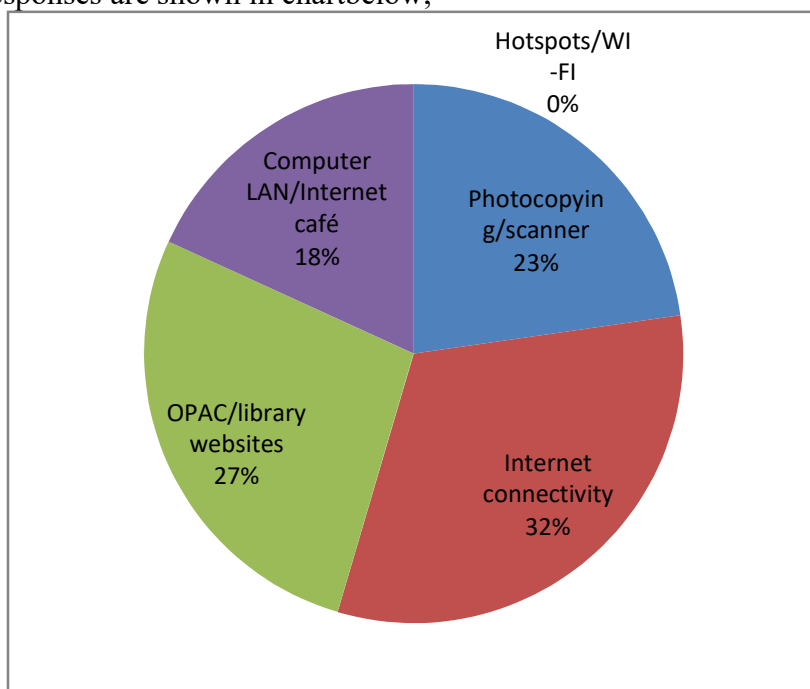
#### Chart Methods of acquisition of electronic resources

The pic chartabove indicated the responses of the respondents on the methods used for the acquisition of electronic resources in their libraries. The respondentsindicated Subscription

(37%) as the major method used for acquiring e-resource. (26%) indicated purchase, while (21%) were using consortia and (16%) indicated free/open internet sources methods.

### **Facilities for accessing electronic resources.**

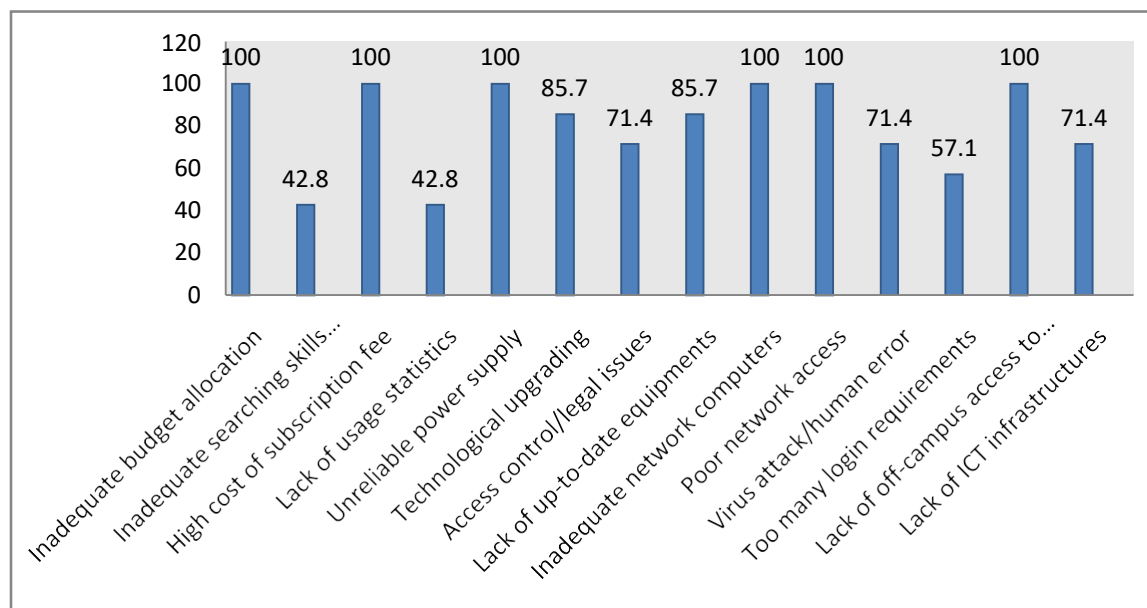
The respondents were asked to identify the facilities provided for access to electronic resources; their responses are shown in chart below;



**Chart Facilities for accessing electronic resources**

The above pie-chart indicated that (32%) of the respondents show Internet connectivity as the major facility for the provision of access to electronic resources in their academic libraries. This was followed by OPAC/library website (27%), while photocopying/scanner (23%). The availability of computer LAN/Internet café and Hotspots/WI-FI are (18%) each.

### **Challenges of Acquisition and provision of Access to Electronic Resources**



### **Chart Challenges of acquisition and provision of access to electronic resources**

The chart above indicates the respondent’s challenges of acquisition and provision of access to electronic resources in the academic libraries. All the respondents indicated budget inadequate budget allocation, high cost of subscription fee, unreliable/ poor power supply (100%) as the major challenges in the acquisition of electronic resources follow by technological changes as a result of upgrading of hardware and software (85.7%) while others respondents indicate access control/legal issues (71.4%), inadequate searching skills and lack of usage statistics(42.8%). However, for the provision of access to electronic resources, the respondents indicate their major challenges are inadequate network computers, slow internet connectivity, and non-existence of off-campus access to university subscriptions as the major challenges for the provision of access to e-resources. While others challenge for the provision of access is lack of up-to-date equipment (85.7%), virus attack (71.4%), and too many login requirements (57.1%).

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The study shows that the major method of acquisition of electronic resources in Federal University Libraries is through subscription, followed by a purchase, consortia, and free/open internet sources. Federal University libraries used a different method for the acquisition of electronic resources depending upon the types of electronic resources.

The Federal University Libraries in the North-central state provides access to e-resources through Internet connectivity; follow by OPAC/Library website. The academic libraries have an integrated OPAC for print and e-resources, this helps the users to search and locate an existing



resource on a particular subject in one place irrespective of format. Also, most of the libraries provide other access facilities like a computer LAN/Internet café, Hotspots/WI-FI in addition to the above facilities to enable users to search and access information resources at any points at ease. This study collaborated with Kashimana (2019) who cited Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) posited that “the more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used. Readers tend to use information resources that require the least effort to access.

The major challenges of acquisition and provision of access to e-resources are; inadequate budget allocation for the acquisition of e-resources with the high cost of the subscription fee and poor power supply, slow internet connectivity, inadequate network computers, and non-existence of off-campus access to university subscription hindered federal university libraries subscription to relevant e-resources, which were in demands thus academic community lose interest in accessing the available e-resources.

### **Conclusion**

Acquisition and provision of access to electronic resources in the university libraries is the need of the period as libraries are termed treasure of knowledge and students of today are web savvy, especially with the advent of ICT. It has been revealed from the study that Federal university libraries in the Northcentral state of Nigeria are posed with a lot of challenges in the acquisition and provision of access to electronic resources.

### **Recommendations**

Considering the findings in this study, the following recommendations are made:

The University librarians should choose co-operative acquisition and resource sharing to reduce the cost and thus manage the tight budget. They should take more initiative in participating in an online consortium for the fulfilment of the information needs of users and thus develop the e-resource collection of the library. Since every library faces the problem of limited budget and high cost of subscription fees, the consortia can assist librarians to provide the required information to the users with minimum expenditure.

1. The libraries understudy should improve their internet bandwidth for better access to the network.
2. Special software like SFX should be provided in the libraries to alleviate the problem of overlapping the same title by providers.

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