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The Need for Information Technology in Nigeria Polytechnic Libraries

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Abstract

This study which focused on the need of information technology in Nigeria polytechnic libraries, defined the concept and also various information technologies were enumerated and discussed. This paper reported the multifarious advantages of information technologies to include: provision of speedy and easy access to information, provision of round clock access to user, provision of access to unlimited information from different source, facilitate cooperation and the information library networks. This paper also highlighted the various problems and limitation of information technology in Nigeria polytechnic libraries. Among the problems identified are: lack of fund, lack of infrastructural facilities, limited number of computers, erratic power supply. Recommendations that will enable the libraries overcome the problems were made.

Keywords: *Information technology, Polytechnic libraries, Nigeria*

1.1 Introduction

Prior to the advent of information technology typewriters, typing pools, carbon copies, adding machines and physical mail boxes were invoke. The use of information technology has changed all this and revolutionized the workplace in the various polytechnic libraries. Damilola (2012) defines information technology (IT) as the items or equipments (hardware) and computer programmes (software) that allow us to access, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate and present information by electronic means. There are several areas of library operation that are particularly amenable to the application of IT. Madu (2004) identified three major areas that IT could be useful in library operations. These include: storage of

library materials on Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROM), searching/retrieval systems and networking.

The need for effective usage of information technology (IT) facilities in polytechnic libraries irrespective of their geo-political zone of location is a fundamental one. Today, information has become a vital raw material in our rapidly changing society. Oduwole and Oyesiku (2012) assert that, all human activities on earth have much to do with information technology of all kinds. These activities which can be recorded in books or other materials are kept in a medium or organized place called a library, for general use and consultation.

Information technology, according to Etim (2002) is the application of computers

and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. Similarly, Oketunji (2001) states that the IT available for library use include: personal computer; (CD-ROM, telefacsimile (fax): network: electrocopying (scanning): and the Internet. It based on this background that this paper reviews the importance of information technology and its application in polytechnics libraries in Nigeria.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

2.2 Information Technology Available for Polytechnic Libraries

There are various available technologies to select from. Such technologies are explained thus:

i. Computer and Central Servers

The use of computer has permeated all aspect of human use such that no aspect that is left unturned by computer revolution. It is a technology that is affecting these sectors of education, economy, health, manufacturing industries and polytechnic libraries inclusive. Anaro (2012) states the advantages of computer/server networks to include:

Many file, like large databases can be stored in a single location, they are easier to update, backup and archive with dependable results.

The server is usually is a high performance computer that ensures speedy data access and delivery and provides the foundation to add capabilities such as centralized accounting. The computer/server is software that operates residues in the server and provides the 'intelligence' for managing files in the network.

A computer/server network allows centralization of software. Software of the entire office users can be stored in the server and accessed by everyone.

Installation and update need to be done only on the server, not on the individual PCs.

ii. Networking

According to Jack (2013) networks are usually classified according to the geographical spread, i.e., the area covered by the computer network. And as such we have:

- i. Local Area Networks (LANs): A LAN is the smallest class of area network typically extending up to a few kilometers .It is usually operated by a single organisation concentrated on a single site, or several sites in close proximity, e.g. on a single building. Most commercial cyber café operators operate a local area network connected to the internet.
- ii. Metropolitan Area Network (MAN's): It is usually smaller than Wide Area Network (WAN) but larger than local Area network (LAN) for example if a Polytechnic has several campuses spread across the metropolis, then they may operate Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs).
- iii. Wide Area Network (WAN): This is the largest network of all. In this case the Nigerian Polytechnics could interconnect all the existing polytechnics all over the country. Each linked to the central server where digitized library resources could be accessed by students and staff of the various institutions.

Library staff can as well use computer in association with other technologies to meet their personal or user information needs. To meet personal information needs, staff can use computer for word processing, browse, receives or send e-mails, etc. Meeting library users' information need entails searching and retrieving information requested. Generally speaking computer can be used in conjunction

with other technologies to provide internet services.

2.1 The need for Information Technology in Nigeria Polytechnic Libraries

Information technology in polytechnic libraries in Nigeria is of great importance due to its numerous advantages. According to Totech (1999), information technology provides some advantages to the libraries which:

- i. Allows easy integrations to various activities
- ii. Facilitates co – operation and the formation of library networks
- iii. Helps avoid duplication of effort within a library and between libraries in a network.
- iv. Eliminates some uninteresting and repetitive tasks.
- v. Helps to increase the range of services offered.
- vi. Ultimately may save and/or generate money
- vii. Increase efficiency.
- viii. Provide making opportunities of range of service offered

Blake (2012) states that the use of computer, information storage and retrieval processes are rapidly being automated, one of these is the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). The online catalogue is often user oriented or user friendly. The computer-based retrieval is faster, more flexible, more comprehensive and more up-to-date than manual systems.

Formson (2010) states that information technology provides numerous benefits and advantages to library users. Some of these advantages he identified are:

- Provision of speedy and easy access to information
- Provision of remote access to users.
- Provision of round the clock access to

users.

Provision of access to unlimited information from different sources

Provision of information flexibility to be used by any individual according to his or her requirements.

Facilitating of reformatting and combination of data from different sources.

Provision of more up to date information.

2.3 Problems and Prospects of IT use in Polytechnic Libraries

Despite the numerous benefits and advantages offered by the use of information technology, there are problems and limitations. According to Akinwunmi (1999) these challenges include: lack of funds, lack of infrastructural facilities, erratic power supply, choice of software, lack of competent personnel, limited number of computers. Consequently, Anunobi (2004) proffered the following as some of the solutions or remedies to the problems associated with the use of IT: adequate provision of funds, constant power supply, regular supply of the spare parts of IT equipment.

In his view, Uhegbu (2011) states that information technologies in polytechnic libraries perform major tasks and these include: information processing, decision making, sharing information and innovation. Uhegbu further stressed on four basic components of IT which include electronic processing, transmission of information, equipment and dissemination of information in multimedia.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is no doubt that the use of information technology has multifarious merits and advantages to polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. This paper has in no small way exposed to librarians, the library users and

library educators the advantages that can be derived from the information technology usage in our polytechnics in Nigeria. Going by the numerous merits of IT, enough funds should be made available to achieve full automation of the various sections of the libraries. It is highly recommended that giant generating sets and stand by systems to provide electricity whenever there is power outage should be made available by the management of the various polytechnics. The institutions' management should constantly organize seminar and workshops on how to use information technology for the various library operations.

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