

Repositioning Faculty Libraries For Effective Information Service Delivery Through Technological Innovations In Post COVID-19 Pandemic Era

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Abstract- The wake of COVID-19 pandemic has thrown in a revolution of technological resources and its usefulness in dissemination of information services in Academic libraries. There is need to strategize for effective use of evolving technological resources. Post COVID-19 pandemic era requires emphatic sensitization and implementation of the government protocol to avoid reinfection of the community within the university environment, which is usually populated. An observational factor of the non-pharmaceutical preventive measures compliance against COVID-19 (which is regarded as the new normal within the faculty libraries) requires stringent enforcement by a supervisory team due to the high rate of deviance in the university environment. This paper seeks to discuss the strategies for re-positioning of faculty libraries to effectively use trending technologies to disseminate information needs of the teeming students in their various departmental academic environments. The paper recommended measures to divert pressures from the Main Library to the faculty libraries with the objectives of providing intellectual library services in a controlled population to avert breaching laid down government protocols within the university community. The technological measures in this perspective are: KOHA, RemoteXs, RFID and Groupware Technology etc. The challenges are; infrastructural inadequacies, funding, adaptability of the new normal and enforcement of the preventive protocols. Recommendations are: Inaugurating COVID-19 Protocol Committee, Budgeting and financing appropriately, Up-skilling and Retooling, Activation of Institutional Repositories and Positivism in Attitudinal change to use of technology for effective information service deliveries in faculty libraries.

Keywords: *Faculty Libraries, Post Covid-19, Technological Innovation Service Delivery*

Introduction

The era of 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) depicts the use of technologies as innovative sustainable tools to information literacy as well as effective and efficient aspect of intellectual information service delivery in academic libraries. Suffice it to say the ills of the era is the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic due to lack of immediate vaccines to curtail the spread, while the cautious preventive measure is the non-pharmaceutical approach for curtailing its spread. The following were emphasis on; maintaining distance of one to 2 meters, which is equivalent to 3 feet, regular washing of hands with soap and running water, wearing of face mask/shield, and avoiding crowded places. The imminent COVID-19 pandemic has infused recession and affected our economy in general. We therefore need to enforce government non-pharmaceutical preventive protocols in academic environments to curtail its community spread.

According to the Director, National Centre for Disease Control (2020), at a press conference of the Presidential Taskforce on COVID-19, he observed its' citizens agitation for ease down on the educational sector, and approved the reopening of schools beginning with the exit class. Nongo (2020) avers the need to enlighten students on healthy waste disposal habits on

campuses in Nigerian tertiary institutions by medical librarians at the wake of COVID-19, which proffered strategies to curtail community infection.

The idea of dislodging students' entry from the main university library building to the faculty libraries was birthed from Government regulations on avoiding crowds. Whereas, using the faculty libraries would control too many students influx into the libraries. Students' data and details are easily traceable in case of any community infection because of the statistical data compiled during library usage at faculty and departmental libraries. While inadvertently, main university libraries harbour all students from different disciplines to access library information resources. Tracking of students in case of any community infection if arisen is obviously difficult and would spell doom to the entire university system.

The researchers at this juncture saw the need to address the gap in literature for projecting contemporary technologies for remote services and re-positioning faculty libraries to serve students information needs while dis-congesting the main university library building from staff and student vulnerability of COVID-19 infection. The purpose of this paper dwells on introduction of technology-based resources for remote library service delivery in the midst of the pandemic.

Literature Review

The main aim of establishing university libraries is to acquire information resources in different formats to serve various fields of human knowledge. These resources are scientifically processed, organized, for onward dissemination with provided access to them. According to Omeluzor, Dolapo, Agbawe, Onasote and Abayomi (2017) University Library is an established and organized arm of a university with a clear mandate to provide relevant and up to date information resources that meet the information needs of its users. Echem and Odo-Anyanwu (2018) avers the major objective of university libraries is to develop and maintain collections of information resources in all formats such as print and non-print and the provision of such resources to meet the information needs of users. Library and Information resources available in the university libraries include books, reference resources, serial resources, e-resources etc. Library and information resources could be either in print or electronic resources.

While faculty Libraries are designed to provide information services to various faculty and departmental libraries within their remote environments as well as disseminating various specialized information contents. These types of libraries are found in academic environment and the faculty libraries serve strictly faculty members and students by providing access to information which promotes a culture of academic excellence, offering instructions that foster scholarship, integrity and independent intellectual growth and the sophisticated information skills necessary for life-long learning. Most faculty members read articles in an electronic format and away from the library, but they obtain more than half of the articles through the academic library either from the library's own collections and subscriptions, or through interlibrary loan (Hoppenfeld and Smith, 2014).

Bolger and Smith (2006) study affirms the need to upgrade librarians' services in institutions of learning even as their likelihood is "the higher the tier, the better overall quality of their duties". In their review, the processes of carrying out research in the faculties using the appropriate resources enhance best results and outcome of intellectual activities in faculties. Hosburgh (2011) asserted that faculty librarians perform professional responsibilities which includes serving the purpose of disseminating information related to the various and specific disciplines found in both departments and faculties in the university system. His findings emphasized that, one of the fundamental services of librarians in the faculties is usually based

on the teaching of research, sourcing for relevant literature, both online and hard copies, and reference guides among some of faculty librarians core services.

Consequently, in a bid to re-positioning faculty libraries to disseminate information services remotely to adapt with the era of the pandemic innovative technological approach should be exponentially utilized. The 21st century has witnessed a dreaded disease hence an evolving 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) thrives. In the midst of it, schools and libraries were shutdown in a bid to curtail the spread. Libraries are seen as high-risk environment for COVID-19 infection and transmission due to the population of students (Hopkins centre 2020). It is in view of the foregoing, that, the researcher deemed it necessary to conceptualize a technology acceptance model which emphasizes the need for librarians to use technology inclined resources to disseminate information resources and remain relevant in service delivery even when the shelves are gone or restricted to users due to the control measures to curtail the spread of the novel disease Corona virus COVID-19.

This study introduced some obviously non exhaustive types of technology namely; OPAC, KOHA, Remotex, Ezproxy and Groupware designed for remotely organized services to avert inaccessibility of the physical materials in academic libraries by way of collaborative team work to deliver services, all hands must be on deck to demystify relevance of the librarians even when the shelves are gone. According to Consoltech (2019) Collaborative technology refers to; tools and systems designed to better facilitate group work both in office and remote. Invariably, groupware is a suitable software for remote information services. Ibenne & Okai (2020) avers that, collaborative technologies are facilities of inter-personal and inter-group projects and are anchored on a type of software called the groupware.

In essence, a remotely systemic literature review services is enhanced being part of the functions of a faculty librarian in academic libraries due to the information literacy services been a requisite mode of communication and conversation between the users and librarians in each respective faculty libraries (Anthony 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian academic libraries have encountered series of issues during COVID-19 lockdown; by complying with government non-pharmaceutical directives, information delivery services were halted. The dwindling situation affected both economic and educational sectors. It became pertinent for practising librarians and educators to engage in training members through organized e-conference, e-workshop using virtual space to synergize and acquire skills on innovative technologies knowledge proficiency and up-skill towards enhancing their pro activity and responsiveness to a remotely knowledge information service delivery at the emergence of the mantra COVID-19. The emergence of diverse e-training and e-workshop carried out during the lockdown was enormous, it enabled familiarization, acquaint practicing librarians and educators to become abreast with latest developments of new normal library services in academic libraries besides the limitations orchestrated by technophobia among some practicing librarians who are not ICT complaisant. Librarians learning these trending mode of technology to disseminate information resources a midst government induced lockdown protocols was not easily achievable. However the inadequacies, librarians' inquisitiveness expressed by mostly active participation inclination in innovative technology for sustainable effective library service delivery was encouraging.

Conceptual Model: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by *Vankatesh et al 2003*

This study adopted a Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) 2 & 3, which is regarded as the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology. It was formulated for “user acceptance of

information technology toward a unified view” with four core determinants of intentions and usages with four moderators of key relationships viz: performance expectancy, effort expectancy social influence and facility conditions. The theory holds that the first three are the determinants of user behaviour, gender, age, experience and voluntarism. It is aimed to explain user intentions to use an information system and subsequent usage behaviour, which provides impact assessment and helps to understand the drivers of acceptance in order to proactively, design an intervention. The researchers relied on this model based on the fact that this era of the 4th revolution requires librarians’ acceptance and not rejection to use contemporary technologies in exploring and dissemination of information resources, which is basically dependent on their skills and competencies. If librarians do not acquire any skills and competencies, they cannot use the technologies effectively. This theory therefore relates to this article and portrays unwillingly acts of librarians as rejection of technologies.

Studies by Adekunle, Omoba and Tella (2007) described attitudes of librarians in the developing countries like Nigeria as negative and not encouraging towards ICT use for library efficacy and those discouraging use of ICT acts like fear and rejection slowed down the progress of ICT in the libraries and this led to the development of TAM. However, the new normal has paved ways to avert rejection of ICT and rather embrace its use in its entirety as a necessary tool.

This study is based on repositioning faculty libraries for effective information service delivery in academic libraries through technological innovations in post covid19 pandemic era. Acquiring these technologies is the prerogative implementation of the university management while the issue is acquisition of technology skills and willingness to use it exponentially as a result of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of technologies use by librarians.

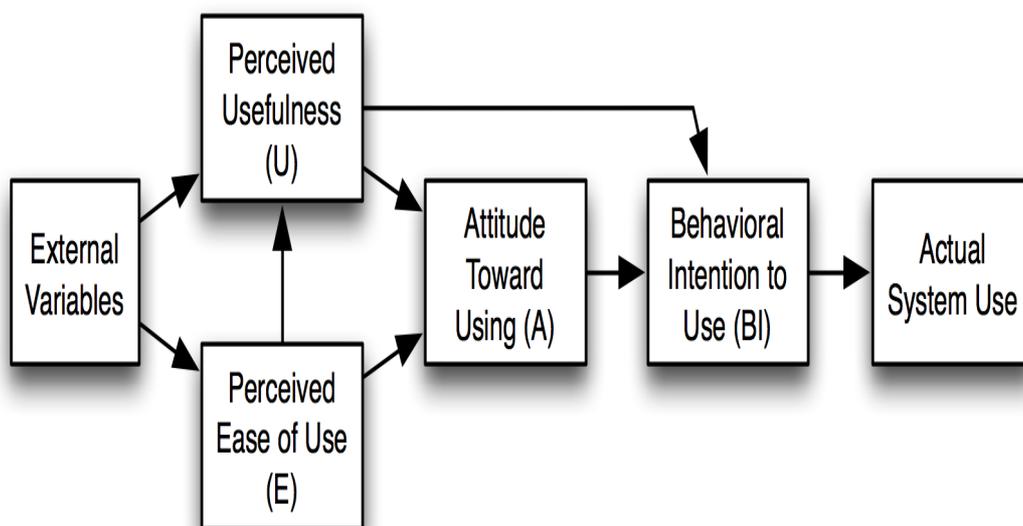


Fig.1: Technology Acceptance Model diagram

Remote Services in the Pandemic Era

This remote information services is extremely the best for the era. It allows for content creation and display by Librarians in the dissemination of their services. There are

manual/traditional ways and Digital models for disseminating information resources in this era. Below are the following samples:

Samples of Technologies for remote library services

Obviously, this list is not exhaustive of the remotely used technologies for effective library service delivery.

I. RFID Technology

RFID simply means Radio Frequency Identification, which uses sensors network technologies. It is a new technology for library transactions (check-in and check out) devices. The era requires the use of technology to disseminate information resources; it is pertinent to delve into increase possible ways of fast tracking information services and user friendly services. This particular technology adopts the fourth law of library sciences, which is “Save the time of the user” (Ranganathan 1931).

II. KOHA

It is a software traced to have been in practical use since 1999. It was funded by a group of libraries in rural New Zealand. Adekunle, Olla & Oshiname (2016) submitted that, KOHA is an open source software (OSS), enjoying robust vendor, technical and other supports from community of users. They described it as user friendly, supports social medial applications, inter-operational with other databases. KOHA is the world’s best open source library automation software used in academic, public and special libraries around the world at the moment. Its modules fully cover, acquisition, serials, cataloging, reports, and tools for add-on module in the library.

III. RemoTex

It is regarded as a single-window platform to access all subscribed e-resources anytime, anywhere, it is capable of accessing scattered e-resources of an institution, bringing them into one umbrella which entails all e-contents. This is a type of remotely technology, which is usable and adaptable at the faculty level both for research and learning where by students build their own knowledge base in spite of diverse relative base discipline (Bhoi 2018)

IV. Groupware

Groupware or Collaborative ware is a term that defines a software which supports multiple users working on a related task in local and remote networks. It is an evolving concept that is more than just multi-user software, which allows access to same data simultaneously (P.C. Magazine 2019).

Challenges of using remote technologies

There are challenges encountered in the following areas:

1. Institutional Repository (OER) non-activation of most of the universities open educational resources in Nigeria orchestrated required information resources service deliveries.
2. ICT Skills acquisition is by staff of the faculty libraries is another drastic challenge as well as the collaboration of millennial era staff and the ICT immigrants create friction and complexity in the work environment.
3. Dilapidated Infrastructures.
4. Budgeting policy and release of funds accrued to the libraries is a major set back.

Recommendation

In recommendation of the use of remotely technologies for faculty libraries, the following areas are listed for effective implementation:

1. Reopening checklist in the libraries should commence in earnest such as: Provision of running water taps, disinfectants, hand gloves, face masks and fumigation against reptiles invasion of the library infrastructures.
2. Inaugurate COVID-19 Protocol Committees to evaluate plans with minimal target users entrance and exit in the faculty libraries and allocating preventive measures schedules to proactive staffers for continuous feedback and impact assessments.
3. Positive attitudinal shifts from negativity to positivist using technology for service delivery.
4. Activate the Institutional Repositories into functionality and uploading hard copies of library holdings for effective access of information in diverse faculty and departmental libraries.
5. Up-skilling of faculty staff and re-tooling of technological variables for the 21st century era of technology innovative services.
6. Budgeting and financing of the Libraries at this juncture is very necessary for enhanced services and sustainability of library services in the face of averting a relapse of the pandemic.

Further Suggestions for Research

To other researchers, this study will serve as a frontier for further studies on use of the remote technologies to disseminate information services. The researchers suggest further studies in the following areas:

1. Demographic variables as predictors for accessing and retrieving information using the technology remote services in the faculty libraries.
2. Evaluate use of contemporary remote technologies usage in faculty libraries after the pandemic era.
3. Evaluate Library Staff perception of the use of these remote technologies for information service delivery during and after a pandemic era.

Conclusion

This study aimed at re-positioning faculty libraries to disseminate information through remote technological resources. Though there are envisaged challenges attached to the use of these technologies. Perceived analysis of use of these elaborated technologies portrays surmountable forces because of the zeal and determination of librarians in keeping to their philosophy of effective and efficient service delivery using the contemporary innovative technology. The evolution of librarian's work schedules has changed drastically and we rely largely on the digital evolution of technology as the new normal for disseminating information, in contrast with the conventional work environment, which is principally office-based.

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