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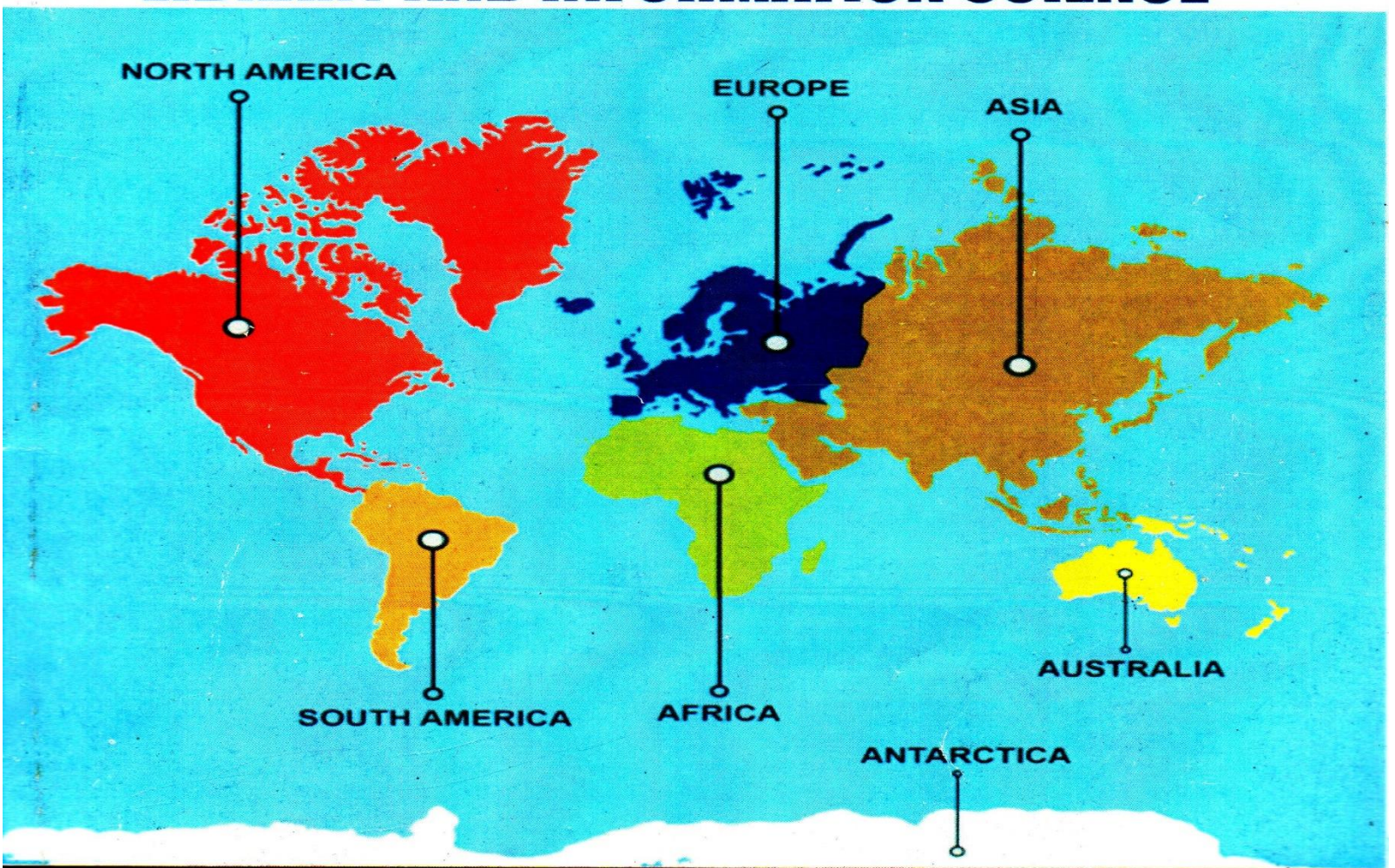

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COMPUTER PROFICIENCY AND UTILISATION OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES

BY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of computer proficiency on utilisation of electronic information resources among law lecturers in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design. Census procedure was used to study 305 lecturers from eight universities across South-South Nigeria in the 2015/2016 academic session. A self-developed questionnaire was used for the lecturers and ninety percent response rate was obtained. One research question and one hypothesis were answered and data was analysed using one way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result showed that computer proficiency significantly influenced utilisation of electronic information resources among law lecturers in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria. It was recommended that law lecturers themselves should make efforts to undertake lessons that will equip them with digital literacy competencies in order to exploit electronic information resources provided by the University Library.

KEYWORDS: Computer proficiency, Law Lecturers, University Library, Electronic Information resources, Utilisation.

INTRODUCTION

There are indications that the poor utilization of e-resources by law lecturers has not justified the input of government agencies and university management in Nigeria generally and in South-South region in particular. The level of utilization of electronic information resources in universities is seen to be poor. It is observed that, law lecturers rarely patronize the library to utilize the e-resources, rather they prefer to request for books, law reports and other materials in print format. It seems that they prefer print resources with its attendant disadvantages such as, competing demands for limited copies of available books especially when such titles had been lent out to users, mutilation due to excessive usage, defacement and in extreme cases, outright theft or destruction by natural elements. E-resources are those information materials in the library that can only be accessed electronically, with the use of ICT facilities. University libraries specifically provide these resources to cater for the academic needs of the university community. Law lecturers, as part of the university community, are allowed unrestricted access to these resources. These resources give room for current and up-to-date information to be utilized timely and remotely without compulsory face to face contact with the provider as in traditional librarianship. The poor utilization of electronic information resources by law lecturers could be described as a loss on investment by the university authorities; the law lecturers deprive themselves of relevant, current information and global trends in their field as provided by the e-resources platform; thus their legal research activities and the calibre of knowledge imparted on students is hampered by reason of their poor or non-utilization of e-resources.

Computer proficiency has to with possessing the requisite skills to perform various tasks and function on the computer. This includes the ability to navigate the online environment and retrieve relevant information which is the hallmark of electronic information resources. This is generally perceived to determine the effective or poor usage of electronic information resources. Could this be applicable to the utilization of electronic information resources among law lecturers in universities in South –south Zone, Nigeria? It is in an attempt to unravel this puzzle that this research sought to investigate the influence of computer proficiency on utilization of electronic information resources among law lecturers in universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Statement of problem

In recognition of the importance of Electronic Information Resources to research, most University libraries in Nigeria including those in the South-South zone have made substantial investments in providing electronic information resources in law libraries to enable law lecturers in the universities utilize current information that will enhance their teaching of law, conducting of legal research and also keeping in tune with global developments and innovations. This vast investment in electronic resources by government and university management has not yielded desired returns on investment as law lecturers seem reluctant to take advantage of this noble gesture. One wonders if this seeming reluctance on the part of the law lecturers is a result of perceived lack of skills in manipulating the online environment. It is in light of this that the study sought to investigate to what extent computer proficiency influences utilization of electronic information resources among law lecturers in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Computer proficiency

Computer proficiency in this study refers to the ability to use the computer system to perform a wide variety of tasks without assistance. This crucial skill is critical to the law lecturer's aptitude to navigate the online environment effortlessly. There are certain EIR that are designed specifically for legal professionals and lecturers, such specific EIR/databases such as Lexis Nexis Academic, Heinonline, Westlaw, Legal pedia, Law pavilion, etc, consist of definite information which when utilized improves legal knowledge and ultimately contributes to legal knowledge. When law lecturers possess relevant computer proficiency, it makes the research work faster, saves time, and also enhances efficiency due to ability to deploy powerful searching and cross-referencing technology in accessing information.

Utilisation of electronic information resources

Okello-Obura and Ikoja-Odonga (2010) carried out a research on electronic information seeking among Law lecturers at Makerere University, Uganda. The aim of the study was to establish the level of computer skills of Makerere University Law lecturers and how it affected their utilization, determine the use of electronic information resources among Law lecturers, and to determine the attitude of Law lecturers towards electronic information resources. A total of 36 law lecturers constituted the population of the study. A survey research technique was adopted. The study used a structured survey questionnaire to collect data. From the findings of the study,

it was highlighted that to access electronic resources, networked computers were necessary; and computer literacy affected the utilization of e-resources. The finding revealed that Law lecturers when asked to suggest where they would want to access networked computer from, the majority (96%) suggested work places and on campus (72%).

Also, Isah (2010) examined the pattern of usage of electronic library by academic staff of the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. The goal of the study was to help the University library and the authority of the university identify the level of acceptance of the University e-library among academic staff, its effectiveness, and the availability of ICT infrastructure. Specifically the study sought to examine the extent of usage of electronic information resources. Furthermore, the study identified factors contributing to and militating against usage of electronic library at the university. The results demonstrated that academic staffs were fully aware of the electronic library resources. Majority of the respondents (70%) claimed that they did not visit the e-library to access e-resources, while, only 36.6% indicated that they accessed the e-library resources from their offices. Respondents were computer literate. However, slow internet access, power outage and non availability of e-resources relevant to their information needs were indicated as hindrances to the use of e-library. Part of the recommendations included the fact that university library should re-orientate the academic staff of the University on how to access the electronic resources/databases subscribed to by the University.

Furthermore, in a study undertaken by Agaba (n.d) titled Assessment of the utilization of Makerere University electronic information resources by academic staff: Challenges and Prospects. The researcher investigated the utilization of electronic information resources by the academic staff of Makerere University in Uganda. It examined academic staff awareness of the resources' availability, the types of resources provided by the University Library, factors affecting their utilization, problems faced, and offered recommendations for the way forward. The study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature, employing questionnaire, interview and content analysis methods. The sample population was 300. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed; and only 157 were retrieved and found usable. This however did not affect the reliability and validity of the study since methodological triangulation was used Findings revealed that the University provided most of the electronic information resources and most academic staff were aware of their availability. Findings also revealed a number of factors affecting electronic information resources' utilization and the problems faced by academic staff, such as inadequacy of facilities for use which led to congestion. The study revealed that 13.4% of the respondents were beginners in computer use. It is no wonder, therefore, that poor computer skills was one of the problems cited. Major conclusions were that despite a number of problems inhibiting use of these resources, a number of academic staff were aware of the availability of these resources and some used them. Particularly, a limited number of academic staff utilized electronic information resources. To achieve this little success, the researcher reported that the University Library employed a number of strategies. Most staff were now aware of the availability of these facilities though they have not used them. Major recommendations included among others: enhancing of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) network or bandwidth, increasing the number of Information and Communication Technologies, decentralizing of service provision, increasing marketing strategies, and training of staff on information communication and technology skills.

Computer proficiency and utilisation of electronic information resources

In a related study, Gowda and Shivalingaiah (2009) studied research scholars towards usage of electronic information resources; a survey of university libraries in Karnataka. The aim was to find out the preferences of the research scholars towards print and electronic resources, the effectiveness of usage of electronic resources among researchers of various disciplines. The impact of electronic resources on the quality of research. A survey design was adopted using questionnaires for data collection from researchers of humanities, social science and science disciplines in six universities in Karnataka. The sample population was made up of 845 research scholars. Their findings showed that in general, the research scholars preferred print resources and there exists significant differences in the preferences of print over electronic resources among various disciplines. They identified the gaps in the need and availability of electronic resources like online journals and databases in the university libraries, the findings revealed that the electronic resources have created hope among the research community in searching for information, and recommendation, included that research scholars should hone their skills through engaging in training and retraining. In a study conducted by Aliyu (2013) on the access and use of e-resources by the lecturers and students of school of management and information technology in Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, the research design was surveyed and carried out using a management population of 62 lecturers and 3275 students, proportionate Sampling technique was used in drawing 120 respondents as sample for the study. The data for the study were gathered from the questionnaire which was retrieved from the respondents. Out of the 120 copies of questionnaire distributed for the study, only 82 copies of the questionnaire were found usable for analysis. Simple percentages were used to analyze the collected data. From the results of the data analysis, findings revealed that MAUTECH, Yola did not have sound IT infrastructural facilities and that e-resources were much preferred by respondents because they were more informative, more useful and less expensive however staff and students were not satisfied with the IT infrastructural facilities in the University and the findings showed that there was a need to train lecturers and students in the use of e-resources. The study recommended among others that the University authority and the central library need to train lecturers and students in the use of e-resources and the University library should have enabling environment for access and use of e-resources. Anyaogu and Mabawonku (2014) examined legal information resources availability and utilization as determinants of law lecturers research productivity in Nigerian Universities. One of the objectives was to ascertain if computer skills of law lecturers influenced their utilization of e-resources and online legal databases. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 517 out of 905 lecturers from 16 Faculties of Law in 29 Universities across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. A researcher developed questionnaire was used for the lecturers and 80% response rate was obtained. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results showed that law books, legal periodicals, reference materials, law reports, legislation and statutes, newspapers, loose leaf, indexes and abstracts, and digests were readily available to law lecturers while e-resources and online legal databases were less available and thus less utilized. The study recommended that the university management should organize regular computer training for lecturers and also create awareness in law libraries to inform lecturers in the Faculties of Law on the use of legal information resources within and outside the library so as to efficiently assist them in retrieving and utilizing information for research productivity. In a study conducted by Egberongbe (2016) where the major purpose was to assess the use of

digital/electronic information sources and services by faculty members of social sciences of three Universities in Nigeria. The purpose of investigation was to inquire about the respondents' appreciation of the resources, level of utilization based on availability and access, benefits derived from usage as well as challenges encountered, as a result of usage. The study adopted a quantitative research method, using questionnaire survey to collect data on 50 social scientists from each of the faculties. The data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. The study revealed non-availability of major sources of electronic information in the social sciences in both the university libraries and faculties; a major barrier to usage was identified as lack of information technology (IT) knowledge to effectively utilize the available resources. The study recommended adequate acquisition of digital resources; improved provision of sources of digital information resources and access; provision of faculty specific user training and information literacy instruction; improved marketing of digital resources by the university libraries; and a provision of a campus-wide online library services system to the faculties.

METHODOLOGY:

The survey research design was adopted. The census procedure was adopted to study 305 law lecturers out of the eight public universities that are accredited to run Law programmes in South-South, Nigeria. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The research question was analysed using descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviations, while the hypothesis was tested with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

The Mean scores and standard deviation (SD) of the research variables was calculated and presented in Table 1. Data that was collected for analysis were generated from a total sample of three hundred and five (305) law lecturers who teach in the faculties of law of the public universities in the South-South geographical region. The mean score indicated that there was mean variation in computer proficiency with respect to utilization of electronic information resources in law libraries of the public universities in the South-South geographical region.

Research question:

To what extent does computer proficiency influence the utilization of EIR among law lecturers?

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of the influence of computer proficiency on the utilization of EIR among law lecturers

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
Computer proficiency			
Low	205	16.95	5.122
Average	38	21.28	2.969
High	32	26.07	3.210

Table 1 revealed the Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent of influence of computer proficiency on utilization of electronic resources among law lecturers in Law Libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The result showed that a higher number of law lecturers have a low level of computer proficiency while a small number are skilled in navigating the computer. This is seen in the high and low Means scores of 26.07 and 16.95 for low and high levels of computer proficiency respectively. In other words, this means that few law lecturers possess the requisite computer skills to manipulate the computer system optimally while a greater number do not.

Hypothesis: Computer proficiency does not significantly influence the utilization of EIR among law lecturers.

Table 2

One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of influence of computer proficiency on the utilization of EIR among law lecturers

Computer proficiency	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Low	205	16.95	5.122	
Average	38	21.28	2.969	
High	32	26.07	3.210	
Total	275	21.42	5.737	
Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F-ratio
Between group	8267.239	2	4133.620	251.94*
Within group	8154.233	273	16.407	
Total	16421.47	275		

Significant at 0.05 level; df =2 & 273; critical F=3.02

Table 3
Fisher's LSD of influence of computer proficiency on the utilization of EIR among law lecturers

Computer proficiency	Low (n=201)	Average (n=103)	High (n=196)
Low	16.54[a]	4.62[b]	9.08
Average	10.50[c*]	21.17	4.45
High	24.54*	9.89*	25.62

(MSW=13.349)

a) All group means are along the principal diagonal
b) Differences among group means are above the principal diagonal
c) t-values are below the principal diagonal
* Significant at 0.05 level

Computer proficiency does not significantly influence the utilization of EIR among law lecturers. The independent variable in this hypothesis is computer proficiency of law lecturers grouped into low, average and high while the dependent variable is utilization of electronic information resources. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical tool was used for data analysis. The result of this analysis is presented in Table 2.

Results of analysis revealed that the calculated F-ratio of 251.94 was greater than the critical F-ratio of 3.02 at 0.05 level of significance with 2 and 273 degrees of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This meant that, computer proficiency had influence on utilization of electronic information resources in law libraries of the public universities in the south-south geographical region, Nigeria.

Since the result was significant, a post-hoc comparison among group means was conducted to determine the pair wise group means difference responsible for the significant influence. Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) statistic was used in carrying out the analysis. Result of the analysis was presented in Table 3.

Result of Fisher's LSD in Table 3 showed significant pair wise comparison as follows: Low versus average ($t=10.50$; $P < 0.05$); low versus high ($t=24.54$; $P < 0.05$) and average versus high ($t=9.89$; $P < 0.05$). The result indicated that, the higher the level of computer proficiency possessed by law lecturers, the higher the extent of utilization of electronic information resources in law libraries of the public universities in the south-south geographical region, Nigeria.

Discussion

The findings of the study in this regard indicated that, computer proficiency had influence on utilization of electronic information resources in law libraries of the public universities in the south-south geographical zone, Nigeria. This implies that a law lecturer would be amenable to utilizing electronic information resources when he possessed excellent computer skills. Corroborating this assertion, Uwaifo and Eiriemiokhale (2013) report that university lecturers in

Edo state who were computer proficient derived several benefits from the use of electronic information resources.

Also, Egberonge (2016) in his study found that the level of IT skills among lecturers, scholars and library staff were low thus adversely affecting their utilization of e-resources. The study recommended that lecturers should make efforts to be computer literate either by taking private lessons or through workshops as arranged by the university. The above suggestion underscores the great need for lecturers to be computer literate as it would enable them utilize electronic information resources and enjoy their attendant benefits which includes the ability to publish and present internationally acceptable papers and impart the current legal principles to their students. Similarly, Dhanavandan, Esmail and Nagarajan (2012) also observed in their study that majority of their users who were faculty members indicated that they preferred print version of information resources for their convenience and this, the researchers attributed to their low computer skills Agaba, Kigongo-Bukenya and Nyumba (n-d) in their study on electronic information resources by the academic staff of Makerere University in Uganda found that the University Library provides electronic information resources and that most academic staff were aware of their availability, but did not utilize them. The researchers traced the problem of non-utilization of electronic information resources by academic staff to their lack of computer skills which rendered them not proficient in navigating and searching for information in the online environment.

From this finding, one might deduce, therefore, that law lecturers who are computer proficient would be more likely to explore new technologies, databases and EIRs. They would be more likely, for example, to explore a library's website and find that the library has specialized resources, and they might even try some searches on those resources, without or with less, encouragement from the law librarian. This therefore, implies that the effective utilization of the libraries' electronic resources requires that law lecturers be computer proficient so as to search for electronic information independently.

Conclusion

The research has shown that computer proficiency significantly influenced utilization of electronic information resources among law lecturers in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The result revealed that the number of law lecturers who possessed low level of computer proficiency were higher than those who possessed a high level of computer skills. The inference that can be drawn from the outcome of this study is that since most of the law lecturers have low computer proficiency, this therefore accounts for the poor utilization of electronic information resources even where the University Library has subscribed for same.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it could be recommended that:

1. Law lecturers who are not proficient should make efforts to undertake lessons which would equip them with digital literacy competencies in order to exploit EIRs provided by the law library effectively.
2. The University Library should make provision for regular faculty specific user training
3. The ICT directorate should organise computer literacy refresher courses for all categories of academic staff.

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