

Awareness and Accessibility of e-books in South-East University Libraries, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to investigate the awareness and accessibility of e- books in South –East university libraries in Nigeria. The population for the study comprised registered postgraduates students of the library. Using a purposive sampling method, a total of 217 (74%) respondents were drawn from a total population of 295 registered users. Questionnaire was used in collecting data. Out of 217 copies of the questionnaire administered, 180 (83%) were completed and returned. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse data using frequency counts, bar chart and percentages. The findings showed that awareness and accessibility of e-books among postgraduate students in South- East University libraries were improved much that 82% accessed e-books in the libraries. Similarly, findings shows that open access is one of the major source of e-books. The study also reveals that 51% were accessing both paid for and free e-books, whereas 41% of the participants indicated free e-books while those who access paid for e-books only were 72%. Challenges identified includes embargo period, issues of payment per loan basis, re-licensing tittle/erratic power supply etc. The study recommends that management should lobbying with government and publishers to highlight the importance of access to affordable e-books in Nigeria libraries and solving the problem of embargo among other.

Keywords: E-Books Awareness, Accessibility, Undergraduate Perceptive, Universities in South-East

Introduction

The concept of e-books has been around for a long time, particularly in fantasy and science fiction genre writings. However, it was not until the advances in computer technologies in the late 1980s that the concept moved into the realm of practicality. In the late 1990s, several companies marketed commercially viable e-book systems (Doman 2001). By early 2001, more than 18 e-book systems were available on the market. Most of these systems have since disappeared. There have been a few producers that have continued to develop and adapt their systems in an attempt to garner widespread use (Doman 2001). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, academic libraries began purchasing e-book collections for students to access copyright protected e-books, in addition to providing access to public domain e-book collections. This access was provided with the underlying assumption that students would embrace and read e-books.

However, as these collections were being made available, early research conducted by Nafisa, Njideka and Popoola (2016) gauged availability and accessibility of e-books by librarians in Nigerian libraries. A total of 273 librarians completed the survey, for an estimated response rate of 87%. The results indicated that 66% of the participants attest that e-books were accessible in their libraries whereas 32% of the participants indicate that e-books are not accessible in their libraries while 10% of the participants did not respond. In similar studies on whether, e-books are readily acceptable by users is still in its infancy. The University of California library (UCL) in February 2001 surveyed its four campuses and reported that most institutions were still in the trial stage with their e-book subscription. In that year UCL indicated that the acquisition of e-books had little or no impact on their purchase of printed titles. Librarians commented that they felt the role of e-books was not to replace printed text but serve as a duplicate copy (Snow hill, 2001). However there is the need to investigate the choices for making effective use of e-books. Therefore the aim of this study is to survey availability and accessibility of e-books in the south - East University libraries.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- 1 To ascertain level of awareness
- 2 To ascertain level of accessibility of e-books in the South- East University Libraries
- 3 To examine the sources of e-books in the South-East Libraries
- 4 To ascertain whether South- East Library users accessing free e-books, paid or both
- 5 To identify challenges facing e-Books in South - East Libraries

Research Questions

The following are the questions to which the study will provide answers:

- 1 What are the level of awareness?
- 2 What are the level of accessibility of e-Books in South – East University Libraries?
- 3 What are the sources of e-Books in your libraries?
- 4 Are you accessing free e-Books, paid or both
- 5 What are the challenges facing by postgraduate students in accessing e-Books in South –East University Libraries

Review of Related Literature

The term e-book is used variously in the literature to refer to hardware, software and document content. Whereas from the user perspective, an e-book is frequently viewed as a dedicated reading device and not as the associated content, according to a survey on e-book features undertaken by Henke (2002). Hawkins (2000) states that “an e-book is the contents of a book made available in an electronic form”. But Lynch, & Tenny (1999) stressed the need to distinguish between a digital book (the content) and the viewing technology (hard ware and software). Hawkins (2000) outlined three true electronic publishing implementations of the e-book format to which can be added, the dimension of proprietary and non- proprietary technology. More so, an electronic book is commonly referred to an e-book, and is simply a print book in an electronic format. E-book can be produced in numerous format that range from very basic text files to well structured, purpose built files that use one of the emerging standards for e-book such as the e-pub and Adobe PDF standards (Payare&Lal, 2014). Hermon, (2007) affirmed that from the day of its introduction, libraries realized the importance of e-book and made them as part of their collection development. Libraries acquire e-books through subscription or purchase licences polices and provide them to the user via library OPAC, website etc.

In Nigeria, the emergence and integration of e-books has been at a slow pace, but in the last few years electronic books are gradually representing an increasingly important component of the resource collection of academic libraries which is evident in the accreditation requirements

for libraries by the Universities Commission. This could be linked to the fact that e-books are been widely acknowledged as a solution to the paucity of textbooks which is most pronounced at the tertiary level of education in Nigeria (Thomas, 2011). Previous survey on e-book usage demonstrated low usage such as findings reported by Abdullah and Gibb (2006), Anuradha and Usha (2006), Bennett and Landoni (2005), Ismail and Zainab (2005), and Chu (2003). This was reported by limited range of available e-books, poor design, lack of awareness regarding its availability and lack of widely advertisement of this resource. In addition, there is a widespread reporting of the increasing importance of e-books to academic communities (Mckiel, 2007; Nelson, 2008). In the opinion of Armstrong et. al (2002) E-books provides many advantages, there is no need of physical space and hence the problem of shelving or re-shelving doesn't arise. E-books cannot be damaged or mutilated; stock taking or missing books will not be a problem.

A recent study conducted by Folb (2011) assessed the use and factors affecting use of e-books by all patron groups of the Health Sciences Library System. A total of 871 patrons completed the survey, for an approximate response rate of 18.5%. The results indicated that library e-books were used by 55.4% of respondents and that, in general, respondents preferred print for textbooks and manuals and electronic format for research protocols and reference books. In spite of little promotion, 65.5% were aware of the e-book collection. Shelburne (2009) received 1,547 responses. Fifty seven percent of these reported that they had used e-books. Approximately 41% of respondents who had not used e-books indicated it was because they did not know they were available, 15% did not like to read from the screen, 10% stated that they did not know how to find e-books, and 7% that they had a preference for printed books. The results show that users considered e-books better than print books in terms of space and storage, accessibility 24/7, currency of information, and availability from any location. Healy (2002) interviewed 3, 200 faculty members, undergraduate as well as graduate students and observed that e-books were used for research, teaching and learning. In support of this view, Adewole-Odeshi (2014) in her study on the attitude of students towards e-learning in South-West Nigerian universities posits that students have a positive attitude towards e-learning because they find the system easy to use and useful for their course work. E-book save time, space and effort. And are used more than printed books. They also allow multi-user access concurrently by users of geographically distributed environment (Abdoulaye & Said, 2012). A Report on the Survey of the eBooks and e-Lending in African Countries by Margaret Allen and Sarah Kaddu (2014) revealed that the sources of eBooks include: open access, library subscriptions, websites, Google, online book stores such as Amazon, itunes, and courtesy of

world readers. He also, found out that majority of the respondents 52% indicated that they were accessing both paid for and free eBooks, those who access paid for eBooks only were 5%, and those who access free eBooks were 43%. In a similar study conducted by Nafisa, Njideka and Popoola (2016) shown that 53% of the respondents attested that they were accessing both paid for and free e-books. Whereas 32% indicated free e-books, while those who access paid for e-books only were 10% and 9% did not respond.

- **Barriers of e-book**

Hurdles to using e-books beyond discovery and preference include poor user interface, login requirement, and digital right management issues. In addition, the difficulty in downloading or printing portions of an e-book was cited as a problem by Cassidy et al (2012) and Shelburne (2009) while interface issues have improved over time. Walters (2013) encouraged librarians to work with publishers to find a model that works for users. The erratic nature of electricity power supply in Nigeria is a major problem (Adeyanju et al, 2012).

Others problem faced when using e-books according to Cassidy et. al (2012), and Muir & Hawas (2013) include difficulty in simultaneously referring to multiple texts. Researchers that need to refer to multiple texts may prefer print. Additionally, accessibility issues were evident such as when reading sessions timed-out for inactivity before the users was finished reading. A similar study by Nafisa , Njideka and Popoola (2016) revealed challenges faced when using e-books to include embargo period, issues of payment, re-licence tittle among others.

However, the absence of reliable selection tools remains a significant problem in identifying the e-books that are most relevant for academic libraries as noted by Sarah Thompson and Steve sharp (2009).

E-book Leasing and Licensing Unlike print books, e-books are leased rather than purchased. Publishers and vendors offer three kinds of e-book leases:

- i. Annual access: The library pays an annual fee for one year's access. The lease can be renewed each year.
- ii. Perpetual access: The library pays a one-time fee. There may also be an annual platform fee.
- iii. Pay per use: The library is billed, or debited from a prepaid account, based on the number of uses (titles viewed, pages viewed, etc.). There may be an annual platform fee.

Downloading Content. The ability to download chapters or portions of the e-book to a device for later use is a highly valued feature, with 93% of respondents rating it as very or somewhat

important. However, respondents expressed frustration with those e-books that restricted downloading or printing to chapters or other defined sections. Sarah Thompson and Steve sharp (2009).

Methodology

Research design

A descriptive Survey design was adopted for this study because it was considered appropriate. It involves a systematic and comprehensive collection of information about the opinions, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and behaviours of people (Aina and Ajiferuke, 2002). Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting four university libraries (two State and two Federal Universities in the South – East offering postgraduate programmes in library and information science) which met the criteria for the study. They include: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Imo State University and Abia State University. The population for this study comprises a total of 217 registered postgraduate students, who are library users drawn from four university libraries in South- East University Libraries. This is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Population and Sample of the Study

Name of University	Population
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	65
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	63
Imo State University	45
Abia State University, Uturu	44
Total	217

Source: 2014/2015 Academic Session retrieved from Universities Libraries

Sample and sampling procedure

A sample of 217 (74%) respondents was drawn and used for the study.

Instrument for data collection

Questionnaire was designed and used for data collection. It was designed based on the objectives of this study. The questionnaire was in two parts, the first part was designed to gather personal and demographic information of the respondents while the second part of the questionnaire was administered to collect information on awareness and availability of e-books

as well as challenges faced by postgraduate students in the South-East University libraries in meeting their needs

Validity and Reliability of the instrument

The instrument was giving to three experts whose research areas of interest include accessibility and availability of information resources and information management for scrutiny and expertise judgment. This was done to check the appropriateness of the instrument. A test retests method was used to measure the performance of the instrument and it provided a reliability coefficient of 0.83.

Data presentation and analysis

Out of 217 copies of the questionnaire administered, 180 (83%) were completed and returned. Data were presented for analysis using the descriptive statistics which include; frequency count, bar chart and percentages.

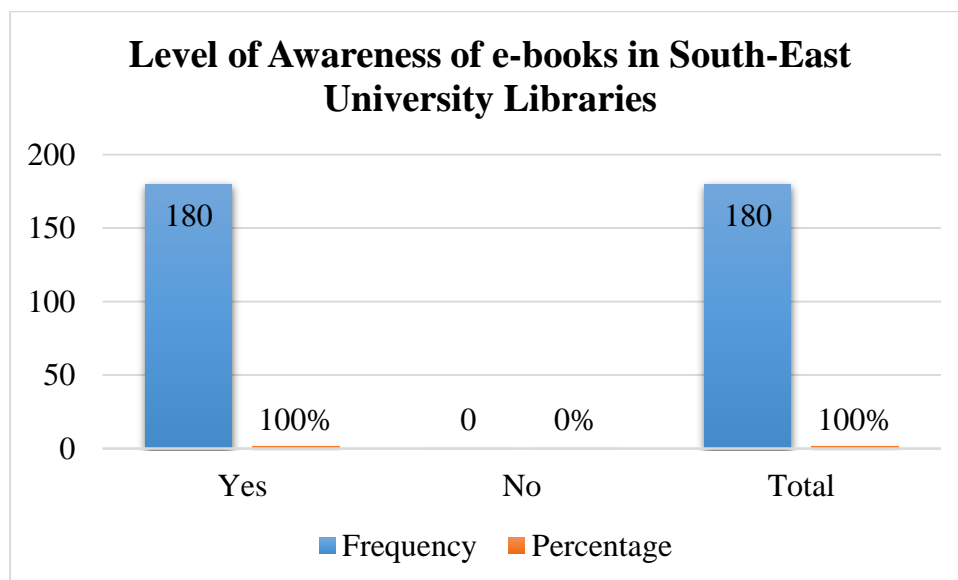


Figure1: Level of Awareness of E- books in the South- East University Libraries

Fig 1, shows that 100% of the participants attested that e-books are available in their libraries.

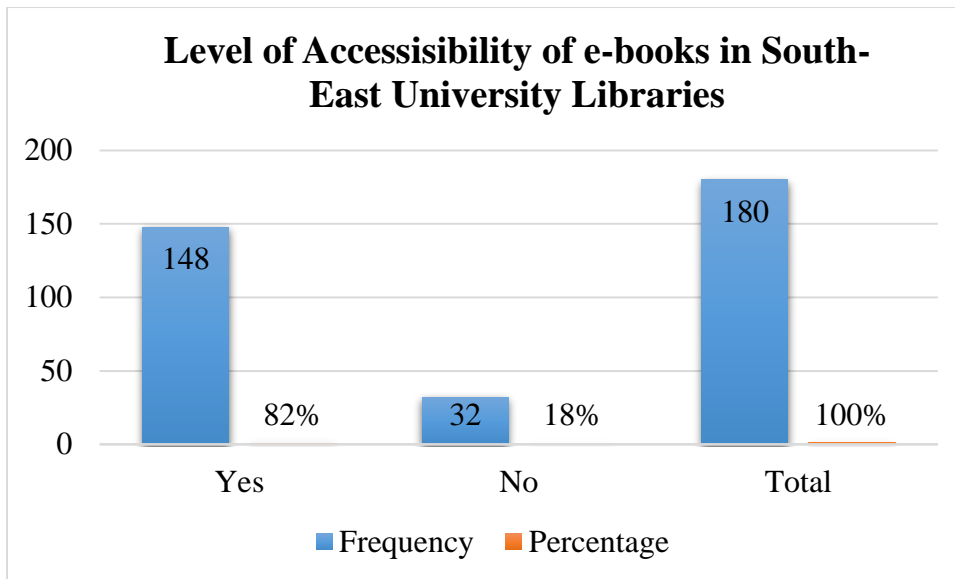


Figure 2: Level of Accessibility of e- books in South- South University Libraries

Fig2, shows that (82%) of the participants accessing e-books while (18%) were not accessing e-books in their libraries .It could be concluded that awareness and accessibility of e-books in South- East university libraries was due to the nature of service provided in the libraries.

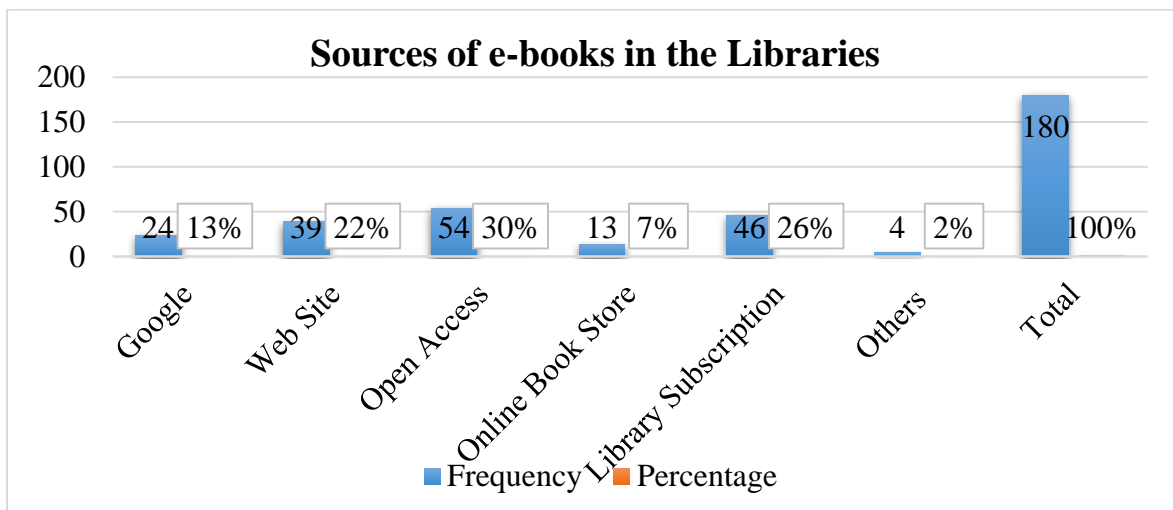


Figure 3: Sources of e-books in your Libraries?

Fig 3, shows sources of e-books in the South-East university libraries 54(30%) of the respondents indicates that open access while 46(26%) library subscription. Whereas 39(22%)

web site, 24(13%) goggle. Whereas 13 (7%) got aware through online book store, 4 (2%) became aware through other means.

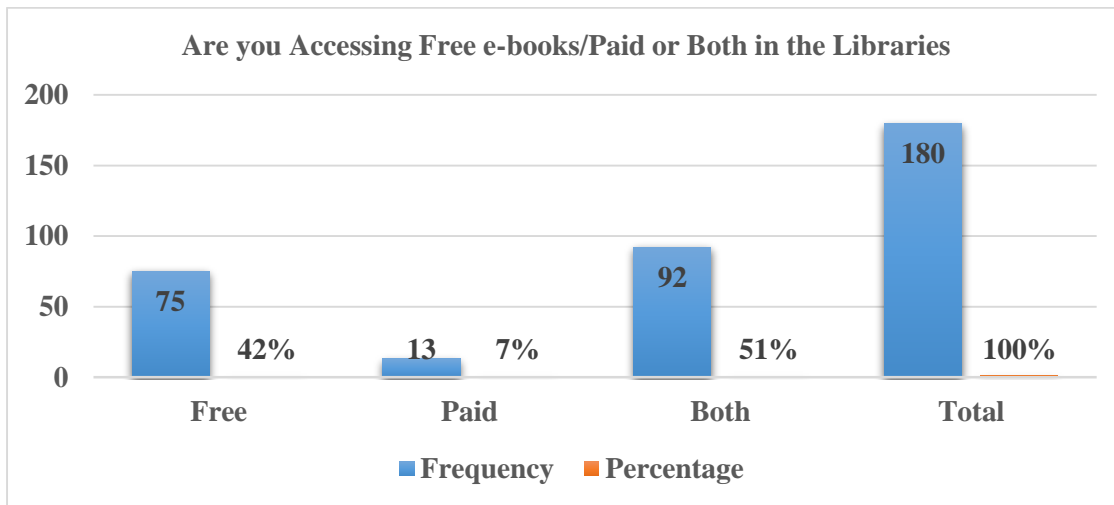
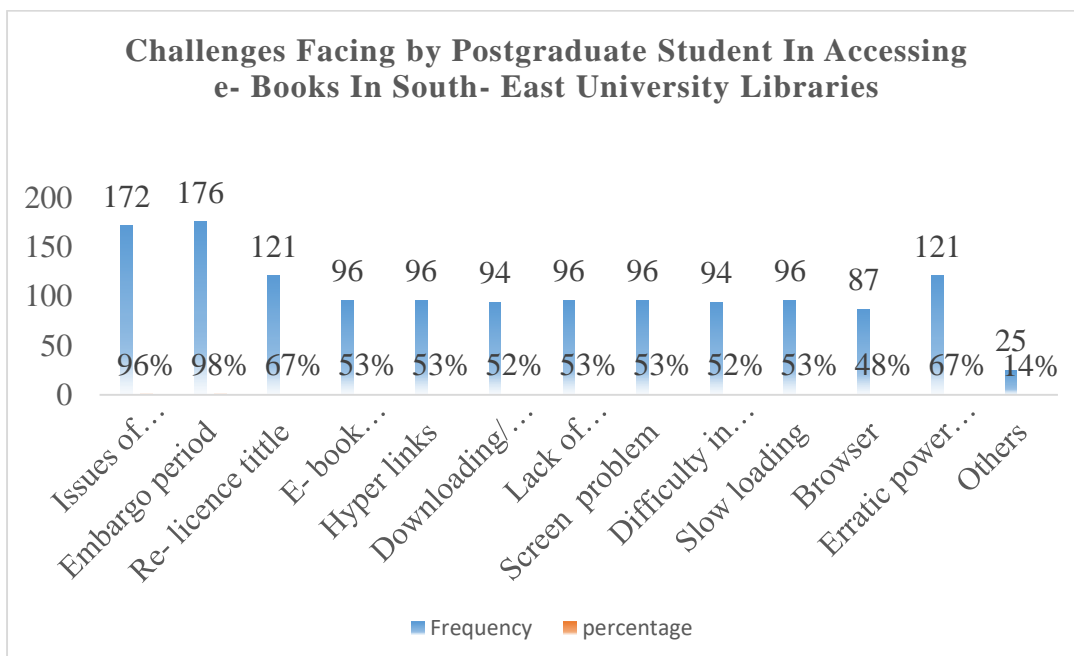


Figure 4: Are you accessing free e-books/paid or both

As observed from **fig 4**, majority 92(51%) accessing both paid for and free e-books, whereas 75(42%) accessing free e-books while those who access paid for e-books only were 13(7%).



N.B Participants are allowed to give more than one reasons

Figure 5: Challenges Facing by Postgraduate Students in Accessing e- books in South-East University Libraries?

Fig 5, indicates that the major constraints that hindered awareness and accessibility of e-books includes embargo period (98%). While (96%) of the participants indicates issues of payment, whereas (67%) indicates re-licence tittle and erratic power supply. (53%) indicates-books management, hyperlink, lack of necessary equipment, screen problem, slow loading among other.

Discussion of findings

The findings in **figs 1** revealed that (100%) of the participants were aware of e-books. This is in line with Folb (2011) who revealed that 65.5% of the respondents were aware of the e-books collection in the libraries. The result in **fig 2** revealed that (82%) accessed e-books whereas (18%) were not accessing e-books in their libraries. This findings is in consonant with Nafisa, Njideka and Popoola (2016), who found out of e-books in Nigeria libraries, that 66% ofrespondents in a survey attested that e- books were accessible in their libraries. The results in **fig 3** revealed that 30% of the respondents indicates open access as the common sources of e- books in the libraries. This findings is in line with Allen and Kaddu (2014) who revealed that the sources of e-books include: open access, library subscriptions, websites, Google, online book stores such as Amazon, itunes, and courtesy of world readers. The results in **fig 4** revealed that majority of the participants (51%) accessed both paid for and free e-books in the libraries. The results in **fig 5** showed that a numbers of challenges were identified, theses includes embargo period (97.7%) issues of payment (95.5%) while re-licence tittle (67.2%) among other. This is in line with Thompson and sharp (2009) who stated that e-books associated with embargo problem, issues of licensing, hyperlinking etc.

Conclusions

From these survey results, we can draw a fair number of conclusions about the awareness and accessibility of e-books in South- East university libraries. It might be established that awareness and accessibility of e-books in South- East University libraries were improved due to the nature of services provided in the libraries. As noted above, the participants were from academic libraries and they had access to e-books through open access, goggle, library subscription, web site and online book store etc. The vast majority of participants specified that they were accessing both paid for and free e-books. E-book is to provide better knowledge delivery and accessibility.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers recommend as follows, that:

- 1 Academic libraries in Nigeria and others libraries in general should make e- books more awareness and accessible in the libraries so as to encourage more students in the use of e-book by acquiring more e- books, create a separate e-book collection, viewing facilities should be freely provided as well as organizing training and better use of e- books.
- 2 University Management and stakeholders in Library and Information Science should continue to support library to access affordable e-books for libraries.
- 3 Management should lobbying with publishers to highlight the importance of access and affordable e-books in Nigeria libraries and solving the problem of embargo among other.
- 4 Nigeria Library Association, Library and Information Science Professionals and Stakeholders should continue to support academic library to sensitize the users and the community at large about the relevance and importance of using e-books.

- 5 Libraries should create more awareness and accessibility of e-books in the library for efficiency and effective service delivery. Continuing education about such service in the form of workshops has therefore become necessary. In order to encourage users to use e- books in the library.

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