

Assessment of Online Information Literacy among Librarians in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study examined online information literacy of librarians in South-South Nigerian federal universities. A descriptive research plan was adopted to engage a population of ninety-four librarians and a sample of seventy-two purposively selected librarians in seven federal universities. A questionnaire was used for data gleaning. Data were computed using weighted mean and standard deviation. Findings showed that the online information literacy possessed by the librarians were the ability to use search engines and online public access catalogues to find online information, to open documents/files on online databases and similar online information storage platforms, to download or save online content, to evaluate online information, to share information on social media and to perform electronic mailing. The librarians acquired this literacy by learning independently, from colleagues and by trial and error. However, attempts by the librarians to acquire online information literacy were hindered by shortage of funds to undergo online information literacy trainings, largely theoretical or non-online oriented information literacy courses in library schools, shortage of internal online information literacy trainings, poor library Internet connectivity and information and communication technology facilities.

Keywords: librarians, online information literacy, Nigerian South-South federal universities

Introduction

A university could be defined as the highest level of tertiary educational institution, which consists of different departments, faculties, sections, units, colleges, institutes, etc., working together to execute teaching, learning and research activities with a view to awarding undergraduate and postgraduate degrees to individuals in diverse fields of study. An essential section of a university is referred to as a university library. It is a library which provides information resources to support pedagogical and research activities in a university. A university library achieves this through the information services provided by its personnel, of which, the professional category is known to as librarians. A librarian can be described as an individual who has obtained any level of degree in Library Science, Information Science or Library and Information Science from a recognized university and who has been employed to render professional information services in a library, such as a cataloguing and classification of information resources, selection and acquisition of information resources, serials management, provision of specialized reference services, library management, etc. Librarians in university libraries provide similar professional information services. In providing these services in a university library, librarians are required to manipulate information resources in diverse formats to cater for the information needs of university library patrons. Traditionally, librarians used to work with information resources in print format. However, the advent of the Internet, which is the largest global network of computers, has introduced a new format of information resources, which is known as digital or electronic format. A prominent type of information resources in this new format is online information resources. Online information resources are information items that are available on the Internet, which is accessed by means of a computer that is connected to the Internet. These information resources include electronic journals, electronic books, electronic theses and dissertations, electronic databases, electronic serials, online public access catalogues (OPAC), etc. Besides these, more and more forms of online information resources are daily introduced on the Internet, making the Internet a great source of information. As a result, the Internet has been seen as both the largest store of information and as a potential primary source of information, which makes information available on any field of knowledge, thus, causing a large proportion of academics to use it to

conduct research by means of its search tools (Askar & Mazman, 2013; Loan, 2012). Librarians in universities are also academics who take advantage of online information resources to provide information services and to conduct research. Thus, the Internet has been acknowledged to have helped librarians to grant access to uncountable information resources around the globe by means of its Web browsers such as Netscape (Mole, 2017).

Despite the benefits the Internet offers university teachers, librarians and other individuals who use online information resources for diverse purposes, the massive volume of online information has, however, presented some difficulties for some information users. It has been noted that the volume of information globally uploaded, edited and distributed online has resulted in a great deal of irrelevant, false and unreliable information for information seekers (Fırat & Kurt, 2015), making it difficult for them to make use of information provided online (Eshet-Alkalai & Soffer, 2012). The same difficulty seems to be experienced by librarians in university libraries, who not only have to use online information resources to meet the varying and changing information needs of university library users, but also to conduct research and publish scholarly papers as required of them as academics. Consequently, the imperative for academics to be familiar with new skills, tools and techniques for searching online information has been stressed (Loan, 2012). As the Internet is littered with irrelevant and unreliable information, it becomes vital to possess the ability to evaluate its information when using such information (Mole, 2017). The new skills or techniques required to search for and evaluate information online has been known as online information literacy.

Information literacy could be conceived as a set of abilities which enables an individual to take advantage of information in print and in non-print format for utilization. Information literacy has been described as a blend of a collection of expertise and capacity to perceive information need, find and assess information effectively, efficiently and ethically and use it in an effective way to solve problems and make decisions (Association for College and Research Libraries Section of the American Library Association, 2016; Bitri & Akkaya, 2018). Williams as cited in

Pearson Education (2016) stated that online information literacy involves information literacy with information sources on the Internet. Online information literacy may, therefore, be described as the ability to recognize, locate, find, assess and effectively use information resources available on the Internet. Online information literacy tends to be used synonymously with Internet information literacy or web-based information literacy. The current rapidly changing information environment makes it necessary for librarians in all types of libraries, including university libraries, to acquire online information literacy. Cordell (2013) maintained that all librarians have to be equipped with skills on how to navigate the library website; how to visit a search page or locate the advanced search page; how to locate the help files; how to save or export citations and full texts; how to set up an account in a social media site; how to upload files to that site; and how to comment on others' postings. This is likely to empower them to effectively deal with the vast volume of information provided on the Internet and to maximize its information resources effectively and efficiently to satisfy patrons' information needs and their research demands.

Statement of the Problem

Online information literacy is becoming increasingly important for librarians and other academics in universities as a result of information explosion on the Internet. In realization of its importance for librarians, academics and other professionals, researchers have attempted to investigate online information literacy among these individuals. The available studies which are closely-related to online information literacy are those which have examined Internet literacy skills among lecturers at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Agbo, 2014); web-based information literacy among lecturers in public universities in South-South Nigeria (Anekwe, 2018); and online information literacy among pharmacists ([Peterson-Clark](#) et al., 2010). However, none of these studies specifically engaged librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. The available studies in this part of Nigeria are those which had examined how manual information literacy predicted or correlated with research productivity of librarians in state universities (Igere, 2022; Nkemdilim & Ekoko, 2023). These studies failed to provide any idea about the online

information literacy possessed by librarians in South-South Nigerian public universities. Moreso, the study by Endoware and Dushu (2021) particularly examined digital literacy skills level of librarians in South-South Nigerian federal universities and how such skills enhanced library service delivery. This study also failed to provide any hint about the specific online information literacy skills possessed by these librarians and how they acquired them. This study, therefore, investigated the online information literacy of librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Aims and Objectives

The study was mainly aimed at gaining insight into the online information literacy of librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. It specifically sought to:

1. Discover the types of online information literacy possessed by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.
2. Identify the means of acquiring online information literacy adopted by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.
3. Unravel the challenges in acquiring online information literacy faced by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

The research was executed with a view to finding answers to the following questions:

1. What types of online information literacy are possessed by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?
2. What means of acquiring online information literacy is adopted by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?
3. What challenges in acquiring online information literacy are faced by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research blueprint. The study population was ninety-four librarians in seven South-South Nigerian federal universities. The researchers obtained this figure by skimming the 2024 library personnel nominal rolls and annual duty postings in their universities. On the other hand, research assistants, who were participants in the study, were requested to scan copies of nominal rolls and duty postings of library staff of distant universities and email to the researchers. However, the sample was seventy-two librarians, which was drawn using purposive sample approach. Research data were gathered with a questionnaire, which was composed of two parts: Section A and B. Section A sought data on the librarians' personal details, whereas, Section B comprised Cluster A, B and C. Cluster A, B and C elicited data on the online information literacy possessed by the librarians, the means by which they acquired it and the challenges they faced in acquiring it. Both Cluster A and B were weighted on a scale of Agree (2) and Disagree (1), while Cluster C was weighted on a scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). A cut-off points of 1.50 was set for Cluster A and B, while a criterion points of 2.50 was established for Cluster C. Two senior Library and Information Science lecturers and one Measurement and Evaluation lecturer at Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, validated the instrument. Instrument pilot testing was, however, skipped based on Nworgu's (2015) assertion that a valid instrument tends to be reliable. The researchers distributed ninety-four copies of the draft of the validated questionnaire to the librarians personally and by proxy (use of research assistants). The researchers administered twenty-four copies of the instrument in their institutions while a soft copy of the instrument was emailed to the research assistants, who printed and distributed seventy copies to the librarians in five distant universities. Questionnaires completed and retrieved by the research assistants were sent to the researchers through courier service. Three months was used for data collection. Out of the ninety-four copies of the questionnaires distributed, the researchers retrieved seventy-two copies of

the questionnaires, which were properly completed. These were deemed fit for analysis. The response rate was 76.60%.

The decision rule which was made to interpret results was that, for Cluster A and B, items with weighted means less than 1.50 were to be considered as “Disagreed” while items with means equal to or greater than 1.50 were to be regarded as “Agreed”. With respect to Cluster C, items whose weighted means were less than 2.50 were to be viewed as “Disagreed”, whereas those with means equivalent or greater than 2.50 were to be considered as “Agreed”. Items in this cluster whose means fell within the boundaries of “3.50-4.49”, 2.50-3.49, 1.50-2.49 and “0.50-1.49” were to be regarded as Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively.

Scope of Research

The study attempted to provide insight into online information literacy of librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. It concentrated on the types of online information literacy possessed by the librarians, the ways by which they acquired such literacy, and the obstacles encountered by them in their bid to acquire such literacy. Only academic librarians in federal universities in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria were involved in the study. Library offers were excluded from the research.

Literature Review

Types of Online Information Literacy Possessed by Librarians in Public Universities:

Globally, several previous studies have provided hint on the types of online information literacy possessed by librarians in public universities, even though a great deal of these studies concentrated on their digital literacy. Batool and Ameen (2010) found that the whole of a sample of eight librarians selected from Economics and Management Faculty in the University of the Punjab were capable of transmitting, responding and forwarding electronic mails, using web Dewy and Online Public Access

Catalogues (OPACs), and reading MARC records. Three years later, Baro et al. (2013) discovered that a sample of thirty-five librarians from universities and other Nigerian higher educational institutions became acquainted with how to search databases, employ various search engines and use social media by attending electronic library services workshop which was jointly organized by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria and the United States Mission, Nigeria. In the following year, Agbo (2014) discovered that a sample of 212 lecturers in two faculties at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, could use www to find information for academic activities, save web page files, use diverse search engines to locate educational contents, transmit and receive electronic mails, download files from the Internet and send electronic mails as an attachment. Subsequent research by Emiri (2015) unfolded that a sample of seventy-four librarians in eight public and private universities in Delta and Edo States of Nigeria could send electronic mails, connect with other individuals on social media and surf the Internet. In the same year, Anyaoku et al. (2015) disclosed that a sample of seventy-six librarians in four federal universities and four state universities in South-East Nigeria were capable of adopting Boolean search methods. In the following year, Khan (2016) found that a sample of 212 librarians in fifty-four public and private universities in Pakistan could use the Internet. Four years later, Basahuwa et al. (2020) found that librarians in thirteen public universities in North-central Nigeria were skillful at downloading document by means of mobile phones; using various information search techniques, including Boolean, Google and such social media as Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and library blogs; using online copy cataloging for cataloguing and classification of information resources and at using the Internet to acquire information. In the same year, Mulat and Natarajan (2020) linked the aptitude to perform electronic mailing, use the Internet and engage in social networking with a sample of 206 library professionals in Jimma universities of Ethiopia. About the same time, Manzo (2020) revealed that a sample of 135 librarians in fifteen academic libraries in tertiary institutions of learning in Katsina State, Nigeria, had the skill to communicate and find information online. Two years later, research

brought to light that a sample of fifty-three librarians in public universities in Bayelsa and Rivers States of Nigeria possessed the ability to send electronic mails, surf the Internet and engage in social networking (Friday & Onuh (2022). A concurrent study divulged that a sample of forty-nine subject librarians in traditional and modern universities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, were competent in sending electronic mails and in adopting blended learning (Khumalo et al., 2022). In the accompanying year, it was made known that a sample of forty-two librarians in three universities in Rivers State, Nigeria had the skill to use the Internet, perform library networking and operate over cloud (Daniels et al., 2023). Sometime in the same year, another study established that a sample of 109 librarians from eleven academic libraries (including universities) in Taraba State, Nigeria, could find information and communicate online, assess websites, utilize Boolean logic and so on (Chukwueke & Idris, 2023).

Means of Acquiring Online Information Literacy Adopted by Librarians in Public Universities:

A vast body of research has shown the means by which librarians in public universities gained their online information literacy. A critical look at available literature indicated that, while a lot of studies on digital literacy skills of librarians in public universities have revealed such means, only a handful of studies related to online information literacy have disclosed those means. Much earlier, research has demonstrated that a sample of 171 librarians in public and private tertiary institutions of learning (including public and private universities), in Tamil Nadu, mainly acquired their information and communication technology (ICT) skills by learning formally, informally, learning from colleagues, learning independently, learning from trainings organised at their places of work, learning from trainings provided by suppliers and by participating in information technology (IT) programmes and workshops (Babu et al., 2007). In a subsequent study, a sample of eight librarians drawn from the Economics and Management Faculty in the University of the Punjab were found to have updated their technological expertise mainly by attending workshops, learning from colleagues, browsing the Internet and paying

visits to various libraries (Batool & Ameen, 2010). Five years later, Emiri (2015) discovered that librarians in eight public and private universities in Delta and Edo States of Nigeria obtained their digital literacy skills by means of friends and colleagues' assistance, personal attempts, formal education and programs in information technology. In the following year, Khan (2016) found that a sample of 212 librarians in public and private universities of Pakistan developed their digital skills by undergoing computer and online library instruction. A simultaneous investigation unfolded that a sample of 100 librarians in fourteen public universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan primarily acquired their ICT skills from help given by colleagues, participating in workshops/seminars, reading computer/IT books and undergoing formal education, whereas, other less-commonly adopted methods included adopting tele/video conferencing, attending Library and Information Science schools, undergoing informal education and training given by suppliers (Ahmed & Rehman, 2016). The following year was known for an outcome which indicated that a sample of 134 librarians in seventeen state universities in Maharashtra acquired their ICT skills via independent learning and trial and error approach (Bansode & Viswe, 2017). The same year came with a result which suggested that 62.7% of a sample of sixty-seven librarians with master's degree in library and information science at the University of the Punjab gained ICT skills by engaging primarily in formal learning or training, and secondarily by obtaining assistance from colleagues and by involving themselves in personal study (Iqbal & Khan, 2017). A year later, professional and paraprofessional library personnel at the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria were found to have principally obtained their ICT skills by obtaining extra computer science qualification and by other strategies including attending library schools, receiving friends and colleagues' guidance, participating in webinars, viewing YouTube lectures, participating in workshops/seminars and engaging themselves in independent learning (Oyedokun et al., 2018). In the succeeding year, the generality of a sample of librarians in African public and private universities were found to have armed themselves with digital literacy skills cardinally by attending workshops/seminars, followed by engaging

themselves in real-life personal learning and then by attending library schools (Baro et al., 2019). A simultaneous investigation brought to limelight that 63.3% of a sample of sixty Library and Information Science professionals in the college libraries affiliated to the University of Delhi, obtained their ICT expertise from software suppliers, 61.7% acquired same skill through formal education and 53.3%, through on-the-job training (Bajpai & Margam, 2019). With respect to librarians at the Jimma universities of Ethiopia, the major ways of acquiring digital literacy were found to be attending workshops/seminars, undergoing IT programmes, involving in formal education and undergoing training organized by library management (Mulat & Natarajan, 2020). Another result which emerged in the same year suggested that librarians in institutions of higher learning in Katsina state, Nigeria majorly acquired their ICT skills by involving themselves in personal study, undergoing on-the-job trainings and engaging in computer trainings (Manzo, 2020). Another finding which was generated in the same year showed that the majority of a sample of 233 librarians in thirteen public universities and eight private universities in South-South Nigeria equipped themselves with ICT skills by sponsoring themselves (Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al., 2021). Findings from the study by Friday and Onuh (2022) revealed that librarians in public universities in Bayelsa and Rivers States of Nigeria took advantage of colleagues' assistance and workplace training to possess 21st-century librarianship skills. The same year was associated with the outcome that most of a sample of 138 librarians in public and private universities of Sindh, Pakistan acquired digital information literacy competence by learning independently, participating in conferences/workshops, receiving help from friends/colleagues and by obtaining professional education (Ali, 2022). The years' crop of findings also included that of Onohwakpor (2022), which indicated that librarians at Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria acquired ICT skills by attending formal, informal and in-service training as well as by undergoing short-term courses. Quite recently, Efe (2023) found that the generality of a sample of 153 librarians in six federal universities in South-South Nigeria mainly acquired their

digital literacy by undergoing sponsored trainings and adopting personal trial and error method.

Challenges in Acquiring Online Information Literacy Faced by Librarians in Public Universities:

Several studies have revealed the barriers encountered by librarians in public universities in their bid to acquire online information literacy. Although a lot of these obstacles could be drawn from studies which had examined digital literacy, ICT literacy or computer literacy skills of librarians in government-owned universities, only a smattering of studies which had investigated issues connected with online information literacy of academic staff in universities and other professionals indicated direct challenges. Earlier, research uncovered that work overload was the major obstacle in the acquisition of ICT skills by a sample of 171 librarians in public and private tertiary institutions of learning in Tamil Nadu. This was accompanied by negative institutional management attitude and lastly, by few chances available to the librarians (Babu et al., 2007). Several years later, a study unfolded that the majority of a sample of librarians in the engineering college libraries attached to Visvesvaraya Technological University, Belgaum, Karnataka state, India, were hindered by monetary obstacles, work overload and negative attitude of institutional management in their attempt to acquire ICT skills (Kattimani & Naik, 2013). In the accompanying year, Abbas (2014) revealed that the majority of a sample of forty-four librarians from eleven tertiary educational institutions in Northern Nigeria associated the problems in acquiring their ICT skills with absence of ICT implementation guidelines, lack of capacity building of librarians, whereas few others pointed out prohibitive cost of ICT facilities as the barrier. In the same year, another research from Nigeria demonstrated that funding was the biggest obstacle which prevented a sample of fifty librarians from updating the skills they required for emerging digital library systems at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Ezema et al., 2014). The chain of the year's results included that of Agbo (2014) which showed that absence of institutional and governmental support for human capital development, wavering electricity supply, oscillating Internet connectivity and system failure hindered lecturers at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka from acquiring Internet literacy skills. Result which came up two years later pointed out that efforts to acquire

digital expertise by librarians in Pakistanish public and private universities were mainly frustrated by shortage of capacity building chances, excess workload, lack of time, shortage of electronic library instruction, lack of library digital facilities, insufficiency of real-life human capital development programmes, absence of institutional support, stress arising from adoption of technology and so on (Khan, 2016). Around the same year, absence of adequate library personnel, shortage of programmes on continuing professional development, absence of written guidelines on continuing professional development, limited chances, negative attitude of institutional management towards sponsoring librarians for capacity building and tight-working schedule posed the main barriers to librarians of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in their bid to acquire and sharpen their ICT aptitude. Other challenges the study identified were librarians' lack of interest in updating their ICT expertise, technophobia and personal weaknesses (Ahmed & Rehman, 2016). In the same year, shortage of funding, absence of internal ICT-oriented human capital development programmes for librarians, dilapidated infrastructural tools, librarians' poor engagement in professional conferences, workshops and seminars and non-implementation of ICT in Library and Information Science curriculum were discovered to have hindered librarians in South-Eastern Nigerian federal universities from equipping themselves with ICT skills (Nwabueze & Ibeh, 2016). In the year that followed, Bansode and Viswe (2017) found that the majority of a sample of 134 librarians in seventeen state universities in Maharashtra found difficulty acquiring adequate ICT competence owing to their daily busy-working schedule and lack of chances to enhance their ICT expertise. Around the same time, librarians in the University of the Punjab were found to have been majorly encumbered by absence of capacity building practices, poor facilities and busy-working schedule in their effort to acquire contemporary ICT skills (Iqbal & Khan, 2017). In the following year, busy-working working schedule, demotivation, lack of experience, insufficiency of capacity building and inaptness of Library and Information Science syllabus presented challenges to the acquisition of ICT expertise by a sample of 122 professional and paraprofessional library personnel in the Al-Hikmah University Library (private university) and University of Ilorin Library (public university) (Oyedokun et al., 2018). This study coincided with the research by Anekwe (2018) which unraveled that dearth of finance,

absence of technological equipment, lack of web-based competence and excess workload militated against the acquisition of web-based information literacy by a sample of 480 academic staff in public universities in South-South Nigeria. Findings then surfaced that most of a sample of 214 librarians in thirty-two African public and private universities found it difficult to acquire digital literacy skills due to lack of finance allotted for librarians' capacity building, absence of physical equipment and shortage of skilled ICT instructors (Baro et al., 2019). Another research followed suit, suggesting that attempts by librarians in institutions of higher learning in Katsina state, Nigeria to acquire ICT aptitude were mainly frustrated by absence of human capital development and lack of interest in developing ICT expertise (Manzo, 2020). Another year arrived with the result that insufficient capacity building, non-sponsorship of librarians for training, poor planning/execution of plans and absence of assessment guidelines constituted barriers to ICT skill acquisition by librarians in Nigerian South-South universities (Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al., 2021). The same year also came with another outcome that lack of support or incentive from management, librarians' lack of interest, management's opposition to technology integration, absence of technological facilities and the exorbitant cost of digital literacy skills training restricted the acquisition of digital literacy skills by a sample of 100 librarians in South-South Nigerian federal universities (Endouware & Dushu, 2021). In an accompanying study, librarians in different universities of Sindh, Pakistan had difficulty in obtaining digital information literacy skills as a result of lack of finance, outdated Library and Information Science syllabus, stringent-working plan and lack of management support (Ali, 2022). This year's body of findings was also contributed by Friday and Onuh (2022), which indicated that librarians in public universities in Bayelsa and Rivers States of Nigeria were deterred by poor library funding, lack of personal developmental funds, poor ICT facilities, negative management attitude to personnel development and non-availability of digital library courses in Library and Information Science syllabus as they attempted to acquire 21st-century librarianship skills. What followed were findings that librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria had problems in acquiring digital literacy arising principally from shortage of funding and poor network library bandwidth (Efe, 2023). This result was generated in the same year with another

Assessment of Online Information Literacy among Librarians in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria

research outcome that the obstacles in developing and applying ICT competencies for enhanced job performance among a sample of 133 professional and paraprofessional librarians from Francis Sarwuan Tarka University library and Benue State University library, Benue State, Nigeria, were obsolete and inadequate facilities, poor ICT skills and insufficient access to ICT tools (Idachaba et al., 2023).

Results

This section of the paper provides a tabular display of the research findings based on the research questions posed to give focus to the study.

Research Question 1: What types of online information literacy are possessed by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean ratings of responses on types of online information literacy possessed by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1.	I can use Boolean search strategies (and, or and but) to find information online.	1.45	0.15	Disagree
2.	I have the ability to use search engines to find information online for academic or professional activities.	1.77	0.17	Agree
3.	I can perform effective information search on online databases, repositories, archives or online journals.	1.47	0.15	Disagree
4.	I am able to use online open access catalogues (OPACs) to find information online.	1.78	0.18	Agree
5.	I can open documents/files on online databases, archives, online journals, repositories or	1.85	0.19	Agree

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
	on social media for reading/study.			
6.	I can download or save needed online material or content into my computer or android mobile phone for future use.	1.84	0.18	Agree
7.	I have the ability to evaluate online information based on completeness, appropriateness, recency, relevance, authority of author, etc.	1.69	0.17	Agree
8.	I can share relevant professional or academic information on social media platforms.	1.94	0.19	Agree
9.	I can send, check and reply to electronic mails, including electronic mails sent as an attachment.	1.67	0.17	Agree
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		1.72	0.19	Disagree

Table 1 reveals that the types of online information literacy possessed by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria are the ability to use search engines to find information online for academic or professional activities; to use online open access catalogues (OPACs) to find information online; to open documents/files on online databases, archives, online journals, repositories or on social media for reading/study; to download or save needed online material or content into computer or android mobile phone for future use; to evaluate online information based on standard criteria; to share relevant professional or academic information on social media platforms; and to send, check and reply electronic mails, including electronic mails sent as an attachment. However, the librarians lack the ability to use Boolean search strategies to find online information

Assessment of Online Information Literacy among Librarians in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria

and to perform effective information search on online databases, repositories, archives or online journals.

Research Question 2: What means of acquiring online information literacy is adopted by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean ratings of responses on means of acquiring online information literacy adopted by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	Formal education	1.39	0.14	Disagree
2	Informal education	1.37	0.14	Disagree
3	Self-learning	1.57	0.16	Agree
4	Learning from friends	1.45	0.15	Disagree
5	Learning from colleagues	1.83	0.18	Agree
6	Learning by trial-and-error method	1.53	0.15	Agree
7	Learning from online information literacy trainings organized at the workplace	1.49	0.15	Disagree
8	Sponsoring oneself for online information literacy trainings	1.45	0.15	Disagree
9	Learning from professional conferences, seminars and workshops	1.47	0.15	Disagree
10	Learning from ICT vendors or suppliers	1.44	0.14	Disagree
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		1.50	0.15	Disagree

Table 2 indicates that the means by which librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria acquire online information literacy

include self-learning, learning from colleagues and learning by trial-and-error method. On the contrary, the librarians do not acquire online information literacy through formal education, informal education, learning from friends, learning from online information literacy trainings organized at the workplace, self-sponsorship for online information literacy trainings, learning from professional conferences, seminars and workshops and learning from ICT vendors or suppliers.

Research Question 3: What challenges in acquiring online information literacy are faced by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean ratings of responses on challenges in acquiring online information literacy faced by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1.	Inadequate funds to undergo online information literacy trainings	2.99	0.30	Agree
2.	Predominantly theoretical or non-online based information literacy courses in library schools	3.53	0.35	Strongly Agree
3.	Inadequate internal online information literacy trainings	3.40	0.34	Agree
4.	Lack of time to learn and acquire online information literacy	2.43	0.24	Disagree
5.	Poor Internet connectivity in the library	2.59	0.26	Agree
6.	Scarcity of external online information literacy trainings	2.15	0.22	Disagree
7.	Poor university library ICT facilities	3.57	0.36	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		2.95	0.30	Agree

Table 3 shows that the challenges in acquiring online information literacy encountered by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria are lack of funds to undergo training in online information literacy, predominantly theoretical or non-online based information literacy courses in library schools, inadequate online information literacy-based trainings, poor library Internet connectivity and poor library ICT facilities. However, lack of time to learn and acquire online information literacy and scarcity of external online information literacy trainings do not constitute barrier to online information literacy acquisition by the librarians.

Discussion

The research attempted to provide understanding about the online information literacy possessed by librarians in Nigerian South-South federal universities, how they acquired such literacy and what made it difficult for them to gain such literacy. With respect to the online information literacy possessed by the librarians, the study demonstrated that they were able to use search engines to find online information for academic or professional activities; to use online open access catalogues to find online information; to open documents/files on online databases, archives, online journals, repositories or social media for reading/study; to download or save needed online material into computer or android mobile phone for future use; to evaluate online information based on standard criteria; to distribute relevant professional or academic information on social media; and to send, check and reply electronic mails, including electronic mails transmitted as an attachment. However, the librarians were unskillful at using Boolean search strategies to find online information and at executing effective information search on online databases and online information storage platforms. The finding agrees with previous studies which had linked the ability to transmit, reply and forward electronic mails and use online public access catalogues with librarians in the Economics and Management Faculty at the University of the Punjab (Batool & Ameen, 2010); capacity to send electronic mails, connect with other individuals on social media and surf the Internet with librarians in public and private universities in Delta and Edo States of

Nigeria (Emiri, 2015); skill to download documents using mobile phones, use diverse information search techniques, including Google and social media, use the Internet and adopt online copy cataloging for cataloguing and classification of information resources with librarians in North-central Nigerian public universities (Basahuwa et al., 2020); ability to execute electronic mailing, use the Internet and perform social networking with librarians in Jimma universities of Ethiopia (Mulat & Natarajan, 2020); skill to send electronic mails, surf the Internet and perform social networking with librarians in government-owned universities in Bayelsa and Rivers States of Nigeria (Friday & Onuh, 2022); ability to transmit electronic mails and adopt blended learning with subject librarians in conventional and digital universities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (Khumalo et al., 2022); and the aptitude to use the Internet with librarians in universities in Rivers State, Nigeria (Daniels et al., 2023). In contrast, the result disagrees with studies which revealed that librarians in South-East and North-Central Nigerian government-owned universities were capable of using Boolean search methods (Anyaku et al., 2015; Basahuwa et al., 2020). Most of the librarians engaged by the present research tend to be more inclined towards using online information for research activities, knowledge sharing and dissemination to professional colleagues and university library patrons. A larger proportion of them appear to be particularly interested in searching for online information using Google or www and scholarly databases such as Research Gate, academia.com, Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, etc., and not necessarily interested in adopting advanced search techniques. Their main reason for searching information online seems to be to obtain academic or research-based information which they need and immediately save it for current or future use. This could be accountable for their ability to use search engines, OPACs, open and download online documents, disseminate information on social media and execute electronic mailing.

The study also revealed that the librarians acquired online information literacy by self-learning, learning from colleagues and learning by trial-and-error approach. However, the librarians did not acquire same literacy by means of formal education, informal education,

learning from friends, learning from ICT trainings organized at the workplace, sponsoring themselves for online information literacy trainings, learning from professional conferences, seminars and workshops and by learning from ICT vendors or suppliers. The result is in line with prior research findings that librarians from the Economics and Management Faculty in the University of the Punjab updated their technological skills majorly by learning from colleagues (Batool & Ameen, 2010); that librarians in public and private universities in Delta and Edo States of Nigeria acquired their digital literacy skills via colleagues' aid and personal efforts (Emiri, 2015); that librarians in government-owned universities in Bayelsa and Rivers States of Nigeria acquired 21st century librarianship competence from colleagues' help (Friday & Onuh, 2022); that the generality of a sample of 138 librarians in public and private universities of Sindh, Pakistan acquired digital information literacy skills through self-learning and colleagues' help (Ali, 2022). On the contrary, the present finding is partly or wholly out of tune with outcome that librarians from the Faculty of Economics and Management in the University of the Punjab updated their technological competencies primarily by attending workshops (Batool & Ameen, 2010); that librarians in public and private universities in Delta and Edo States of Nigeria obtained their digital literacy skill through friends, formal education and programs in information technology (Emiri, 2015); that librarians in public and private universities of Pakistan acquired their digital skills by undergoing computer and online library instruction (Khan, 2016); that librarians at the Jimma universities of Ethiopia principally acquired digital literacy by attending workshops/seminars, undergoing IT programmes, undergoing formal education and training organized by library management (Mulat & Natarajan, 2020); and that librarians in public universities in Bayelsa and Rivers States of Nigeria gained 21st-century librarianship skills through human capital development programmes provided in their places of work (Friday & Onuh, 2022). The finding that the librarians adopted personal learning, trial and error method and enlisted help from colleagues to acquire online information literacy could have resulted probably because institutional management tend to be

indifferent to building human capital in their institutions of learning. Thus, the librarians were compelled to learn the skill independently, seek the assistance of colleagues who possess such skill and learn the skill experimentally.

Lastly, the study discovered that attempts by the librarians to acquire online information literacy were frustrated by inadequate funds to undergo online information literacy trainings, predominantly theoretical or non-online based information literacy courses in library schools, insufficient internal online information literacy trainings, poor library Internet connectivity and poor library ICT equipment. However, lack of time to learn and acquire online information literacy and scarcity of external online information literacy trainings did not constitute barrier to online information literacy by the librarians. The finding aligns with previous results that unstable Internet connectivity and system failure hindered lecturers at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka from acquiring Internet literacy skills (Agbo, 2014); and that absence of funds and lack of technological facilities militated against the acquisition of web-based information literacy by a sample of 480 lecturers in South-South Nigerian public universities (Anekwe, 2018). However, the current finding disagrees with a part of the same result which suggested that excess workload was also one of the obstacles the lecturers encountered in their bid to acquire web-based information literacy (Anekwe, 2018). The barriers encountered by the librarians engaged by the current study may be attributed to federal government indifference to funding federal universities, lack of constant review of the Library and Information Science curriculum in Nigerian library schools, lack of online information-literate Library and Information Science lecturers in library schools and institutional management lack of support for training or sponsoring librarians for training to acquire online information literacy.

Conclusion

The research attempted to understand online information literacy of librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. The study has established that the librarians were capable of using search engines and

Assessment of Online Information Literacy among Librarians in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria

online public access catalogues to find online information, opening documents/files on online databases and related online information storage reservoirs, downloading or saving online material, evaluating online information, sharing information on social media platforms and of performing electronic mailing. The librarians acquired these abilities by learning personally, learning from colleagues and learning by trial-and-error method. However, the librarians' efforts to acquire online information literacy were hampered by shortage of funds to undergo online information literacy trainings, largely theoretical or non-online oriented information literacy courses in library schools, shortage of internal online information literacy trainings and poor library Internet connectivity and ICT facilities.

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Appendix 1: Distribution of respondents of the study

S/N	Names of Federal Universities	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	University of Port Harcourt	12	16.67%
2.	University of Benin	9	12.50%
3.	University of Calabar	13	18.06%
4.	University of Uyo	12	16.67%
5.	Nigerian Maritime University	7	9.72%
6.	Federal University Otuoke	8	11.11%
7.	Federal University of Petroleum Resources	11	15.28%
	Total	72	100%

Appendix 2: Questionnaire on online information literacy of librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria

Section A: Personal profile of librarians

This part of the instrument is meant to glean data on your personal details. Kindly use a tick to indicate the personal details that matches yours.

Institutional affiliation: The list of the federal universities in the table below shows the likely institutions in which you work. Kindly use a tick (√) to indicate your institution.

S/N	Names of federal universities	Response
1.	University of Port Harcourt	
2.	University of Benin	
3.	University of Calabar	
4.	University of Uyo	
5.	Nigerian Maritime University	
6.	Federal University Otuoke	
7.	Federal University of Petroleum Resources	

Section B: Online information literacy of librarians in federal universities in south-south nigeria

This part of the instrument is divided into Cluster A, B and C.

Cluster A: Types of online information literacy possessed by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria

The following table portrays the types of online information literacy you are likely to possess. Please use a tick (√) to show the online information literacy you have using either Agree (2) or Disagree (1).

Assessment of Online Information Literacy among Librarians in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	I can use Boolean search strategies (and, or and but) to find information online.		
2	I have the ability to use search engines to find information online for academic or professional activities.		
3	I can perform effective information search on online databases, repositories, archives or online journals.		
4	I am able to use online open access catalogues (OPACs) to find information online.		
5	I can open documents/files on online databases, archives, online journals, repositories or on social media for reading/study.		
6	I can download or save needed online material or content into my computer or android mobile phone for future use.		
7	I have the ability to evaluate online information based on completeness, appropriateness, recency, relevance, authority of author, etc.		
8	I can share relevant professional or academic information on social media platforms.		
9	I can send, check and reply to electronic mails, including electronic mails sent as an attachment.		

Cluster B: Means of acquiring online information literacy adopted by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria

The table underneath describes the possible ways you could have acquired your online information literacy. Kindly use a (√) to indicate the

means you have gained your online information literacy by answering Agree (2) or Disagree (1).

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree
1.	Formal education		
2.	Informal education		
3.	Self-learning		
4.	Learning from friends		
5.	Learning from colleagues		
6.	Learning by trial-and-error method		
7.	Learning from online information literacy trainings organized at the workplace		
8.	Sponsoring oneself for online information literacy trainings		
9.	Learning from professional conferences, seminars and workshops		
10.	Learning from ICT vendors or suppliers		

Cluster C: Challenges in acquiring online information literacy faced by librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria

The table which follows lists the potential obstacles that could have hindered you from acquiring online information literacy. Make use of a tick (√) to point out such obstacles by answering Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1).

Assessment of Online Information Literacy among Librarians in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Inadequate funds to undergo online information literacy trainings				
2	Predominantly theoretical or non-online based information literacy courses in library schools				
3	Inadequate internal online information literacy trainings				
4	Lack of time to learn and acquire online information literacy				
5	Poor Internet connectivity in the university library				
6	Scarcity of external online information literacy trainings				
7	Poor university library ICT facilities				

تقييم مستوى الوعي المعلوماتي في البيئة الرقمية لدى اختصاصيي المكتبات بالجامعات الفيدرالية بالجنوب الجنوبي لنيجيريا

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المستخلص:

تناول الدراسة تقييم مدى الوعي المعلوماتي في البيئة الرقمية لدى اختصاصيي المكتبات بالجامعات الفيدرالية في الجنوب الجنوبي لنيجيريا. استعانت الدراسة بالمنهج الوصفي لإشراك مجموعة مكونة من أربعة وتسعين اختصاصيي مكتبات وعينة مكونة من اثنين وسبعين اختصاصياً من سبع جامعات فيدرالية تم اختيارهم بطريقة العينة العمدية. وتم استخدام الاستبيان كأداة لجمع البيانات، وتم تحليل البيانات باستخدام المتوسط المرجح والانحراف المعياري كمقاييس إحصائية. أظهرت النتائج أن أبرز مهارات الوعي المعلوماتي التي يمتلكها اختصاصيو المكتبات في البيئة الرقمية كانت القدرة على استخدام محركات البحث والفهارس المتاحة على الخط المباشر للعثور على المعلومات عبر الإنترنت، فتح الملفات على قواعد البيانات ومنصات تخزين المعلومات الرقمية المماثلة، تنزيل أو حفظ المحتوى المتاح عبر الإنترنت، تقييم المعلومات المتاحة عبر الإنترنت، تبادل المعلومات عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وإرسال رسائل بريدية إلكترونية. وتوصلت الدراسة إلى أن اختصاصيي المكتبات اكتسبوا هذه المعرفة من خلال التعلم الذاتي، عن طريق الزملاء وعن طريق التجربة والخطأ. ومع ذلك، فإن محاولات اختصاصيي المكتبات للحصول على درجة من الوعي المعلوماتي في البيئة الرقمية قد واجهها عدة صعوبات من أبرزها نقص التمويل اللازم للتدريب في هذا الإطار، أن دورات الوعي المعلوماتي يغلب عليها التوجه النظري أو غير المباشر إلى حد كبير في مدارس المكتبات، ونقص التدريب الداخلي على الوعي المعلوماتي في البيئة الرقمية. وضعف الاتصال بشبكة الإنترنت في المكتبات، ومرافق المعلومات وتكنولوجيا الاتصالات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اختصاصيو المكتبات، الوعي المعلوماتي في البيئة الرقمية،

الجامعات الفيدرالية بالجنوب الجنوبي لنيجيريا