

USAGE OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES BY UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS AT FEDERAL UNIVERSITY, GUSAU (FUG), ZAMFARA STATE

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Abstract

Electronic information resources are now crucial sources of information for undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. This study aims to investigate the usage patterns of these resources among undergraduate students at Federal University, Gusau (FUG) in Zamfara State. The survey research method was employed for this study. Using a simple random sampling technique, participants were selected from among the 400-level undergraduate students who utilized the library during the study period. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire titled "Usage of Electronic Information Resources." A total of 198 questionnaires were distributed, with 184 completed and returned, yielding a substantial response rate. The findings revealed that 100% of the respondents had used electronic journals, with 74.3% using them primarily for completing assignments. The majority of students frequently accessed electronic journals. The most utilized electronic resources were internet search engines, predominantly used for completing class assignments.

Keywords: Electronic Information Resources, Undergraduate Students, Usage Patterns, Federal

University Gusau (FUG), Zamfara State

Introduction

In this era of rapid technological advancement, understanding how undergraduate students interact with electronic information resources (EIRs) is crucial for optimizing their educational experience. This research endeavors to investigate the extent to which students at FUG are aware of and utilize EIRs, examining the factors influencing their usage patterns and the perceived benefits and challenges associated with their integration into academic endeavors. By exploring these dynamics, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform strategies for enhancing the accessibility, relevance, and effectiveness of EIRs in supporting learning and research activities at FUG and similar institutions across the region.

Understanding the usage of electronic information resources (EIRs) among undergraduate students is pivotal in the contemporary academic environment. Federal University, Gusau (FUG), situated in Zamfara State, Nigeria, provides a pertinent perspective for investigating this phenomenon. In an era marked by the digitization of information and learning resources, assessing students' awareness and utilization of EIRs is essential for optimizing their educational experience. This study seeks to delve into the intricacies of EIR usage patterns among undergraduate students at FUG, exploring the factors that shape their engagement with digital resources and identifying potential barriers and opportunities. By illuminating these dynamics, the research aims to contribute to the development of strategies aimed at enhancing information literacy and promoting effective utilization of EIRs in academic settings.

The investigation into the "Usage of Electronic Information Resources by Undergraduate Students at Federal University, Gusau (FUG), Zamfara State" is anchored in the recognition of the transformative potential of digital resources in higher education. Federal University, Gusau (FUG), located in Zamfara State, Nigeria, serves as a microcosm for exploring the intersection of technology and learning among undergraduate students. Against the backdrop of the digital age, this study endeavors to unravel the nuances of students' engagement with electronic information resources (EIRs), probing into the factors influencing their adoption, utilization patterns, and the perceived benefits and challenges associated with their incorporation into academic endeavors. By shedding light on these dynamics, the research aims to offer insights that can inform interventions aimed at fostering a more inclusive, digitally literate, and resource-rich learning environment at FUG and similar institutions in the region.

Libraries within academic institutions are expected to offer effective information services that support teaching, learning, and research for the university community. Research is fundamental to the survival and advancement of higher education institutions, serving as the essential process for acquiring and expanding knowledge. To effectively impart knowledge, educators must engage in research to deepen their understanding of various concepts, learn from their students, and explore and identify emerging problems. Research is crucial in universities because it significantly influences the quality of education provided. According to Ochogwu (2007), the research activities within a university contribute to its academic excellence. Ansari and Zuberi (2017) further emphasize that a robust research profile enhances an institution's reputation, vision, and recognition on a broader scale. The success of research endeavors relies heavily on access to extensive literature, which is particularly vital for students who depend on the university library's electronic information resources. The introduction and integration of electronic information resources in Nigerian university libraries are pivotal.

These resources facilitate access to vast collections of e-books and e-journals, thus supporting students in their academic and research pursuits.

Similarly, a university library is regarded as a custodian of knowledge, serving as a crucial resource where undergraduate students from diverse disciplines can obtain knowledge and support for self-improvement. The acquisition of knowledge is essential for better understanding and contributing to community matters. Universities, acting as custodians of knowledge, provide an environment where students from various fields can acquire knowledge and skills essential for individual development. The importance of acquiring knowledge extends beyond academic success; it is vital for understanding and engaging in societal issues and prepares individuals for active participation in future community endeavors (Suwan & Panda, 2013). Therefore, a university library can be a breeding ground for creativity and independent thinking. The potential of the university library to foster such an environment, however, relies significantly on the quality and quantity of information resources available (Mbabu, Bertman & Varun, 2012).

Studies have shown that the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities in university libraries has significantly enhanced the generation, access, storage, and dissemination of information (Mohammed & Philip, n.d.). The dissemination of timely and up-to-date information has been made easier with the advent of these technologies, which facilitate the transmission of information through electronic resources. The growing awareness of the importance of information in various human activities has necessitated the provision of more diversified, user-friendly, and continuously updated services to meet the expanding information needs of users (Swain & Panda, 2013).

Tofi (2019) opined that "the rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought revolutionary changes in university libraries, offering numerous options to the user community for conveniently and effortlessly handling various information sources." Consequently, electronic information resources have become the lifeblood of modern library reserves, fulfilling the needs of students, teachers, and researchers efficiently and with minimal risk and time investment (Dare, 2017). Moreover, electronic information resources are crucial in university libraries, where institutions that provide access to these services gain a competitive advantage. These resources are indispensable for academic and research activities, ensuring that the university community remains well-informed and capable of contributing to knowledge advancement.

Electronic information resources are documents that can only be accessed electronically in the library, utilizing information communication technologies (ICT) facilities (Obuh, 2011). Examples of frequently accessed electronic resources by students include the Internet, CD-ROM databases, online databases, online public access catalogues (OPAC), electronic journals, electronic books, and digitized documents. These resources are gradually replacing printed information resources due to their capability to provide users with current and up-to-date information. With the development of ICT, electronic information resources have become widely used and accepted by scholars, significantly increasing in volume globally (Oyedapo & Ojo, 2013). The shift towards electronic resources is driven by their efficiency and the

convenience they offer in accessing and disseminating information, making them indispensable tools for academic and research activities.

The provision of electronic information resources in tertiary institutions represents a modern approach to rapidly accessing vast amounts of research information and disseminating it globally. Due to the significant benefits, they offer, these resources have been widely embraced by university libraries. For undergraduate students, in particular, electronic information resources present excellent opportunities to access scholarly information that might otherwise be inaccessible due to geographical barriers and limited financial resources. When effectively utilized, these resources can greatly enhance students' academic experience by providing access to up-to-date and comprehensive information essential for their studies and research.

Electronic information resources (EIRs) are essential for students, primarily because they make information more accessible, easier to obtain, and provide faster access compared to printed media (Ukachi, 2011). These resources promote access, increase usability and efficiency, and introduce new ways for students to utilize the available information in the university library. EIRs offer users reliable and pertinent information, ensuring that the right information reaches the right user. Moreover, the use of EIRs helps students stay well-informed and up-to-date in their respective fields, a significant advantage over print resources that are not updated regularly (Fabunmi, Paris & Fabunmi, 2016). EIRs are of great importance to the academic and research needs of undergraduate students in university libraries, available in various formats to meet diverse needs. Despite the university libraries' efforts to conduct workshops, seminars, and communicate frequently with undergraduate students about the available electronic information resources, there appears to be an underutilization of these resources (Adeniran & Emeahara, 2016). Encouraging and enhancing the use of EIRs is crucial for maximizing their benefits for academic success and research excellence.

Electronic information resources (EIRs) indeed revolutionize the way we access and utilize information, especially in academic settings. They offer unparalleled convenience, enabling users to quickly retrieve relevant information without the constraints of physical location. Negahban and Talawar's observation highlights the multifaceted benefits of EIRs. First and foremost, they serve as powerful motivational tools for learners, offering a vast repository of knowledge that can cater to diverse interests and needs. Whether one seeks to convey, acquire, transfer, process, or disseminate information, EIRs provide a comprehensive platform for these activities. The accessibility of EIRs is a key advantage, as users can tap into these resources remotely, eliminating the need to visit a physical library. This flexibility not only saves time but also facilitates continuous learning regardless of geographical constraints. Moreover, in the realm of academic excellence and research, EIRs play an indispensable role. They empower scholars and researchers to explore a myriad of topics with ease, fostering a culture of innovation and discovery. The ability to search multiple files simultaneously enhances efficiency and productivity, surpassing the limitations of traditional printed materials. In essence, EIRs represent a cornerstone of modern education and scholarship. By facilitating seamless access to information and promoting collaborative learning, they contribute significantly to intellectual growth and advancement in academic institutions.

Ayeni, Omoba, Tella, and Tella (2007) provide further insights into the multifaceted roles and benefits of electronic information resources (EIRs) in enhancing the performance of students and researchers in universities and other advanced learning institutions. They emphasize the importance of ensuring that students are adept at utilizing EIRs, as this proficiency translates to faster and more efficient utilization of library resources. One of the key advantages highlighted is the ability of EIRs to provide access to a vast array of resources at a relatively low cost and within minimal time. This not only enriches the learning experience but also expands the scope of research possibilities for students and scholars. Furthermore, the advent of technology has transformed user expectations, leading to a demand for services that are readily available on a global scale. EIRs rise to meet these expectations by offering on-demand access to information resources, thereby catering to the evolving needs and preferences of users. In essence, EIRs serve as a catalyst for innovation and progress in the academic landscape. By enabling seamless access to a wealth of information and adapting to changing user demands, they play a pivotal role in driving academic excellence and research advancement.

The observations made by Dadzie (2007) shed further light on the transformative impact of electronic information resources (EIRs) on libraries and academic institutions. EIRs indeed offer unparalleled advantages, enabling users to access information resources from across the globe without the limitations of geographical barriers or financial constraints.

One of the key benefits highlighted is the expansive access to information that EIRs provide, including resources that may have been previously inaccessible due to factors such as location or financial limitations. Additionally, EIRs often offer extensive links to related resources, enriching the user experience and facilitating deeper exploration of various topics.

University libraries, in particular, can leverage EIRs to transcend the boundaries of their physical collections and provide access to information stored on remote servers. This extends the reach of library resources, catering to the needs of a diverse and geographically dispersed academic community. In an academic environment where research activities are prevalent, the timeliness and currency of information are paramount. EIRs excel in this aspect by offering frequently updated content, ensuring that users have access to the latest research findings and developments in their respective fields. Furthermore, the advent of the Internet has further amplified the indispensability of EIRs in academic settings. Features such as remote access, robust search capabilities, and real-time updates make EIRs indispensable tools for students, researchers, and scholars alike. In conclusion, EIRs represent a cornerstone of modern libraries and academic institutions, empowering users with unparalleled access to information and resources that transcend traditional limitations. Their role in facilitating research, enhancing learning experiences, and promoting academic excellence cannot be overstated.

Statement of the Problem

The description provided underscores the significance of electronic information resources (EIRs) in facilitating academic and research endeavors, particularly for undergraduate students in university libraries. EIRs encompass a variety of digital resources, including the Internet,

CD-ROMs, online databases, OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogs), e-journals, e-books, and digitized documents. These resources offer invaluable access to a wealth of information and knowledge, contributing to the educational enrichment of students. Despite the availability and efforts to promote awareness through workshops and seminars, literature suggests that the utilization of EIRs among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities, including FUG Zamfara State, remains low. This observation contrasts with the acceptance and utilization of EIRs in other countries.

Scholars such as Ekenna and Ukpebor (2016), Romanove and Aarnio (2016), Watts and Ibegbulam (2016), and Kalechukukwu (2000) have highlighted the issue of low EIR usage among Nigerian students. Their conclusions are based on studies conducted within Nigeria, indicating a recurring pattern of underutilization of these resources in the academic context. Given this background, there is a need for further investigation into the factors contributing to the low utilization of EIRs among students at FUG Zamfara State. Understanding these factors can inform strategies to enhance awareness, accessibility, and utilization of EIRs, thereby maximizing their potential benefits for academic and research pursuits.

Objective of the Study

The following are the objectives guiding the study:

Objectives

1. Find out the level of electronic information resources use by undergraduate students of FUG.
2. Determine the purpose of use of electronic information resources by undergraduate students of FUG.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of electronic information resources use by undergraduate students of FUG?
2. What is the purpose of electronic information resources use by undergraduate students of FUG?

Review of Related Literature

Electronic information resources (EIRs) are indispensable for students, as they significantly enhance the availability, ease of access, and speed of obtaining information compared to traditional printed media (Ukachi, 2011). These resources improve accessibility, boost usability and efficiency, and introduce innovative ways for students to utilize the wealth of information housed in university libraries. EIRs provide users with reliable, relevant, and timely information, ensuring that the correct information reaches the appropriate user.

Additionally, the utilization of EIRs enables students to remain well-informed and current in their respective fields of study, a benefit that print resources, which are not updated as frequently, cannot offer (Fabunmi, Paris & Fabunmi, 2016). EIRs are critically important for addressing the academic and research needs of undergraduate students, as they are available in various formats, catering to a wide range of informational needs and preferences.

University libraries actively conduct workshops, seminars, and frequent communications to educate undergraduate students about the availability and advantages of electronic information resources. Despite these efforts, there is a noticeable underutilization of

EIRs among students (Adeniran & Emeahara, 2016). Enhancing student engagement with EIRs is essential to fully leverage their potential for academic success and research advancement. By effectively harnessing these resources, students can gain access to up-to-date, comprehensive information that supports their educational and scholarly pursuits, thereby overcoming the limitations of geographical and financial barriers associated with printed materials.

Thanoscodi (2012). Students rely on these resources mainly for conducting research and completing assignments, highlighting the crucial role EIR plays in supporting their academic activities and facilitating access to necessary information and data. Expanding on the academic purposes, Ukachi (2013) details several specific uses of EIR by university students. These include completing class assignments, writing term papers, augmenting classroom work, retrieving current literature, participating in blog discussions, searching for scholarship opportunities, and finding internship placements. These diverse activities illustrate how integral electronic resources are in various aspects of students' academic lives. Furthermore, the study by Osaheni, Oshiotse, and Momoh (2016) supports these findings, noting that students use EIR for research, studying, assignments, exam preparation, and occasionally for leisure. Ansari and Zuberi (2010) also emphasize that electronic resources are primarily used for research, preparing lecture notes, and gaining subject knowledge.

Although the frequency of use is not explicitly detailed, it is a significant indicator of EIR utilization. The frequency likely varies based on the intensity of academic workloads, resource accessibility, and individual study habits. Understanding these patterns requires quantitative data from surveys or academic institutions. In conclusion, the study highlights that students primarily use electronic resources for a range of academic purposes, underscoring their importance in enhancing educational experiences and supporting academic success.

A study on students' electronic information-seeking behavior at KSCE, KIIT University, India, conducted by Swain and Panda (2013), aimed to investigate the frequency of usage of electronic information resource databases among the students. The findings revealed a diverse pattern of usage: sixty-one students reported using these resources daily, twelve students used them weekly, six students accessed them fortnightly, five students utilized them once a month, and three students admitted to rare usage. These results highlight varying levels of engagement with electronic resources among the student population.

In a similar study conducted by Manda (2005) on the usage of electronic resources in academic and research institutions in Tanzania, the frequency of database usage was explored. The study found that the Ebsco host database was used daily by one respondent, Blackwell by four respondents, and AJOL by seven respondents. Additionally, the Emerald and OUP databases were used three times per week by four respondents each, while AJOL had six respondents who accessed it with the same frequency. Weekly usage was reported as follows: OUP by four respondents, Ebsco host by five, Blackwell by six, and AJOL by six. Monthly usage patterns showed that OUP was accessed by eight respondents, Emerald by four, and Blackwell by three.

These studies collectively illustrate the varied frequency with which students and researchers utilize electronic information resources. The daily use by a significant number of students at KIIT University suggests a high dependency on these resources for their academic activities.

In contrast, the detailed breakdown from the Tanzanian study indicates specific preferences for different databases and varying engagement levels. This information underscores the importance of understanding user behavior to optimize the availability and accessibility of electronic resources in academic settings.

Research Methodology

The research design for this study is the survey research design. The total population comprised 198 four hundred level students who were registered with the library. A total enumeration sampling method was employed, meaning that every member of the population was included in the sample. To collect data, a questionnaire was used as the primary instrument. The questionnaire was meticulously prepared based on the objectives of the proposed study and was randomly distributed among the target population. This approach ensured that a wide range of responses could be gathered, reflecting the diverse perspectives and behaviors of the students. The data collected from the questionnaires were presented and analyzed using descriptive statistics, which provided a clear and comprehensive overview of the findings. Percentages were utilized to interpret the data, offering a straightforward means of understanding the distribution and frequency of responses. For more precise and robust analysis, SPSS Version 23 was employed, facilitating detailed statistical analysis and enhancing the reliability of the results.

Data Analyses and Presentation

The data collected from the survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics, primarily focusing on percentages. Descriptive statistics are a powerful tool for summarizing and interpreting data, providing insights into the central tendency, dispersion, and distribution of responses. In this analysis, percentages were used to quantify the frequency or proportion of respondents who provided specific answers to the survey questions. This approach enabled the researchers to present a clear picture of the patterns and trends within the dataset.

Results

Table 1 presents data on the electronic information resources (EIRs) utilized by undergraduate students at FUG. The table outlines the number of respondents and the corresponding percentages for each type of EIR.

EIR Type	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
e-journal	191	100
e-book	184	91
CD Rom	162	57

According to the data, all 191 respondents, constituting 100% of the total, utilize e-journals. Similarly, a significant majority of respondents, 184 out of 191 (91%), make use of e-books. However, CD Rom usage is reported by 162 respondents, which represents 57% of the total respondents. These findings underscore the widespread utilization of e-journals and e-books

among undergraduate students at FUG. Nearly all respondents access these resources, indicating their importance in academic research and study. Conversely, the usage of CD Rom appears to be less common, with a smaller proportion of respondents utilizing this type of electronic resource. This suggests that while traditional electronic resources like e-journals and e-books are highly popular, other formats such as CD Rom may be less favored or less accessible to students in this environment.

Table 2 provides insights into the purposes for which undergraduate students at FUG utilize electronic information resources (EIRs). The table presents the number of respondents and the corresponding percentages for each specified purpose.

Purpose	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Research/writing project	18	14.8
Retrieve current literature for studies	114	25.9
Internet search engines	138	70.3
Augment class works	15	9.2
Use e-journal to do assignments	18	14.8
Use OPAC in the library	13	5.5

According to the data, 18 respondents, representing 14.8% of the total, reported using EIRs for research or writing projects. A larger proportion, 114 respondents (25.9%), utilize EIRs to retrieve current literature for their studies. Notably, the majority of respondents, 138 (70.3%), use internet search engines as a means of accessing electronic resources. Other purposes include using EIRs to augment class works (15 respondents, 9.2%), utilizing e-journals for assignments (18 respondents, 14.8%), and using the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) in the library (13 respondents, 5.5%). Interestingly, no respondents reported using EIRs to update their knowledge in subject areas of interest, and there were no other specified purposes mentioned by the respondents. These findings provide valuable insights into the diverse ways in which undergraduate students at FUG utilize electronic information resources for their academic pursuits. While internet search engines are the most commonly used means of accessing EIRs, a range of other purposes, such as research, studying, and class assignments, are also evident among the student population.

Findings of the study

The findings of the study reveal several key insights regarding the utilization of electronic information resources (EIRs) among undergraduate students:

1) High Awareness of EIRs: The study indicates that a significant majority of the respondents are aware of the existence and availability of EIRs. This suggests a positive trend towards the integration and promotion of electronic resources within the academic environment, potentially driven by advancements in technology and digitalization efforts in educational institutions.

2) Prevalence of E-Journals and E-Books: Among the various types of EIRs available, e-journals emerge as the most popular choice among undergraduate students, followed closely by e-books. This finding underscores the importance of scholarly literature and academic publications in supporting students' research and study endeavors. The accessibility and convenience offered by e-journals and e-books likely contribute to their widespread usage among students.

3) Primary Purpose of EIR Usage: The study identifies the main purpose of using EIRs among undergraduate students, with the majority utilizing internet search engines for class assignments. This suggests that students rely heavily on online resources to gather information and conduct research for their coursework and academic projects. The convenience and vast amount of information available through internet search engines make them a preferred choice for students seeking to fulfill their academic requirements.

The findings highlight the significant role of EIRs in supporting the academic pursuits of undergraduate students. The popularity of e-journals and e-books, coupled with the widespread use of internet search engines for class assignments, underscores the importance of digital resources in modern education. These findings can inform educational institutions and policymakers in enhancing the accessibility and utilization of electronic information resources to further support student learning and research activities.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that a significant proportion of undergraduate students utilize electronic information resources (EIRs) for their academic endeavors. However, it is noteworthy that only slightly more than half of the students are considered frequent users, suggesting that there is room for improvement in promoting consistent utilization of EIRs among the student population. The study reveals that undergraduate students predominantly rely on their laptops and desktop computers to access electronic resources available through the university library. This preference for personal computing devices underscores the importance of ensuring accessibility and compatibility of EIRs with commonly used technologies among students.

The primary purposes for which undergraduate students utilize EIRs include completing class assignments, retrieving current literature for studies, and updating their knowledge. These findings highlight the integral role of electronic resources in supporting various aspects of students' academic endeavors, from coursework completion to research and self-directed learning. Despite the widespread use of EIRs, the study identifies several challenges that hinder effective utilization among undergraduate students. These challenges include a lack of skills in navigating and utilizing electronic resources, difficulty in finding relevant information, time constraints, and frequent power outages. Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions, such as information literacy programs and improved infrastructure, could enhance the efficacy of EIR utilization among undergraduate students. The findings underscore the importance of addressing both the facilitators and barriers to effective use of electronic information resources in higher education settings. By overcoming challenges and maximizing opportunities, educational institutions can better support student learning and research activities in the digital age.

Recommendation:

1. The study highlights the importance of greater awareness programs by the university, particularly the library, to promote the diverse array of electronic information resources (EIRs) available. These programs should aim to market the different types of EIRs accessible through the university library, ensuring that undergraduate students are well-informed about the resources at their disposal. Additionally, the library should implement strategies to actively promote and monitor the usage of electronic resources among students on a regular basis, fostering a culture of engagement with these valuable academic tools within the university community.
2. Efforts should be made to organize more comprehensive training sessions aimed at enhancing students' proficiency in effectively utilizing electronic resources. While information about library electronic resources is currently included in the curriculum through the compulsory "use of library" course, there is a need to make the teaching more practical and applicable to students' academic pursuits. These training sessions should go beyond simply teaching students how to locate electronic resources and should instead focus on equipping them with the skills to leverage these resources effectively to achieve their academic goals. By providing practical guidance and support, the university and library can empower students to make optimal use of electronic resources for their studies and research endeavors.

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