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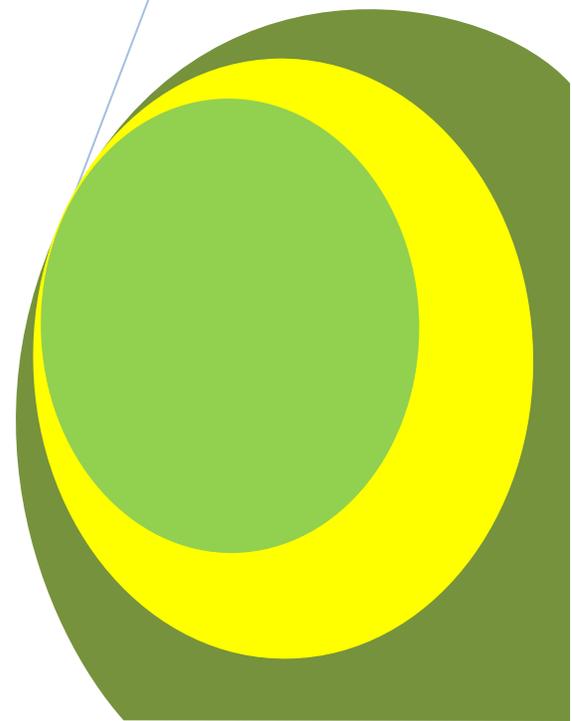
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Awareness and Use of Open Access Journals by LIS Undergraduates in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma

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Awareness and Use of Open Access Journals by LIS Undergraduates in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the awareness and use of open access journals by LIS undergraduates in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. A descriptive survey research design was adopted and questionnaire was used for data collection. The sample for the study was drawn from the population through simple Random sampling technique, and a total sample size of 250 students was drawn from the total population of 620 students. A total of 213 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed with simple percentage, mean and standard deviation. Findings that there is a low level of awareness of open access journals. The findings equally revealed that majority of the respondents are only aware of African Journals Online (AJOL) among the list of open access journals and databases. It was discovered that majority of the respondents use open access journals to a high extent for carrying out search for relevant literature for project and seminars, downloading of articles, and searching of research topics/ideas. The major hindrances to use of open access journals were found to be lack of internet search skills; and limited access to computer terminals. Recommendations include that librarians, lecturers and others stakeholders in the faculty should intensify efforts in creating awareness on the importance of open access publications.

Keywords: Open access, Open access journals, Awareness, Undergraduates, Journals.

INTRODUCTION

The reason for the publication of scientific journals which began in 1665 is to enable researchers share their work quickly and widely, and to establish priority of researchers investigating the same problems (Salager-Meyer, 2012). Journals published around that time could not pay the authors, hence, the tradition of writing for impacts rather than payment became the norm rather than the exception; and it prevailed. Today, the manner in which scholarly research output is being published and made available to users especially in print, is such that they are required to pay for access, mainly due to cost of production. The library, which has the task of making information-bearing resources available for the benefit of its patron, is responsible for subscribing to paid journals which they make accessible to users for free.

Libraries around the world at one point or the other experience sudden cut in budget. The costs of journals subscription have continued to rise without corresponding increases in libraries budgets and the implication of this is that each year, libraries can only afford to subscribe to a very few low cost journals (Goodman, 2004). Among librarians, researchers and students who are required to carry out studies in their LIS in school, serials crisis – a term used to describe the chronic subscription cost increases of many scholarly journals – at one point in time became a major barrier to information access and a serious concern to the stakeholders of scholarship. This challenge to information access, according to Salager-Meyer (2012), informed the urgent need for a solution which turned out to be what is known today as Open Access (OA).

Open access journals are scholarly publications that are freely available on the internet, and free of copyright and other restrictions like licensing. This means that the content within the materials can be read, downloaded, copied, distributed and printed by anyone and from anywhere without discrimination as to their use. Open access contents can be in any format like texts, data, audio, video, and multimedia and scholarly articles. Furthermore, open access is a new mode of scholarly communication through which the author grants to all users a free right of access to and to materials for responsible use, and this use is subject to proper attribution to author (Emojorho, Ivwighrehweta & Onoriode, 2012).

Open access resources are available online to the readers without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Some journals are subsidized, and some require payment on behalf of the author. Subsidized journals are financed by either an academic institution or a government information center, while those requiring payment are typically financed by money made available to researchers for that purpose from a public or private funding agency, as part of a research grant. Open access (OA) is an alternative form of scholarly communication that has emerged from the traditional business mode of scholarly publishing. The basic concept of open access is the online accessibility to scientific literature for readers at no charge and without any technical barriers (Salager-Meyer, 2012).

Mohammed and Garba (2013) believe that inadequate skills to navigate the internet, unstable power supply, unavailability of internet facilities, permanence of open access movement due to unstable financial support, lack of knowledge of the existence of open access journals in the internet are some other constraints to the use of open access journals.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to survey awareness and use of open access journals by LIS undergraduates in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. The specific objectives are to find out:

- i. the level of awareness of open access journals by LIS undergraduates of Ambrose Alli University;
- ii. the extent to which LIS undergraduates of Ambrose Alli University make use of open access journals;
- iii. the benefits of open access journals to LIS undergraduates of Ambrose Alli University; and
- iv. the problems militating against the use of open access journals by LIS undergraduates of Ambrose Alli University.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Open Access Journals

According to Chan (2004) Open Access (OA) is a coping strategy spearheaded by the scholarly community in their effort to free themselves from exploitation and restrictions of the commercial publishers. Based on the Internet technologies, OA provides the potential for developing countries to revolutionize the manner in which scholars can access and disseminate scholarly information since it offers better prospects of meeting the needs of scholarly communication than is the case in commercial publishing, and its advocacy and use is increasing with profound impact on scholarly communication (Kaur and Ping, 2009). Brody (2006) stated that it has made it possible to archive and disseminate, access and retrieve scholarly information easily and without any subscription or password restrictions. Since it has no restrictions it is appropriate, more efficient and quicker than traditional modes of communication and has added advantage as it provides an alternative publishing platform for material in print media as well as material in other formats that could not be put in print media to be archived, disseminated, accessed and retrieved freely and easily without any restrictions.

Open access journals differ from traditional academic journals only in making their contents freely available to all online, usually without any embargo period. The publication process, including submission, peer review, editing, and publication, is otherwise identical.

Awareness of Open Access Journals

Many studies have been carried out on awareness and use of open access journals. Bartle and Walton (2001) argued that most researchers are still reluctant to the use of Open Access Journals; one of the major reasons for this is that they are not aware of what is available to them and what the services is capable of doing. In a similar fashion, the results of the user survey, at the University of Hong Kong library (Korobili, Tilikidou&Delistarou, 2005) shows that 68.8 percent of the respondents prefer to use open access journals compared to 31.2 percent who prefer to use printed journals. In Nigeria, studies such as those of Ntiamoah-Baidu (2008) and Okoye and Ejikeme (2010) found that access to and use of open access resources is still low, the factors that may be accountable for the low use may be awareness and attitude of researchers.

The study by Christian (2008) for example, reveals that while only 3% of 66 respondents at the University of Lagos were aware of the open access concept, 22.7% others knew very little about it and majority (74%) of the respondents were completely unaware of open access. Another similar study involving 27 universities in Canada

reveals that from among 32 survey respondents, 66% had some kind of familiarity with the term open access (Greyson *et al*, 2009).

Benefits of Open Access Journals

Hirwade and Rajyalakshmi (2006) posited that society overall benefits from the open exchange of ideas within the scholarly community and that therefore, the notion of 'open science' is for the good of all. In the study by Ivwighrehweta and Onoriode (2012) found that open access articles receive twice as many citations as articles behind pay barriers, and the advantage is sustained over time. Peter (2004) stated that some are more skeptical, attributing the results to "early view effect" (open access articles were online earlier) and selection bias (better articles, or better authors giving them open access). But the vast majority of studies show that open access results in more citations and possibly greater article impact, which in turn can affect tenure and promotion decisions. This comparative advantage will disappear as open access advances, though all articles will then benefit from increased circulation (Rolands and Nicholas, 2005).

According to Albert (2006), open access also enables data mining. Open access is likely necessary (but not sufficient) for large-scale computation of the scholarly literature, though it will not help with the vast corpus of past literature behind permissions barriers. There is more to open access than just free access. McCulloch (2006) posited that true open access permits any 3rd party to aggregate and data-mine the articles, themselves treated as computable objects, linkable and interoperable with associated databases. Okoye and Ejikeme (2010) indicated that with open access, articles can be accessed online free of charge.

Mohammed and Garba (2013) believe that inadequate skills to navigate the internet, unstable power supply, unavailability of internet facilities, permanence of open access movement due to unstable financial support, lack of knowledge of the existence of open access journals in the internet are some other constraints to the use of open access journals

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey design to examine the awareness and usage of open access journals by LIS undergraduates of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. According to Saheed (2012), descriptive research is used to collect data from a relatively large number of classes at a particular time in order to foster the current status of particular population. The data intended for this study were collected through application of questionnaires.

The population of this study includes all the **620 LIS** undergraduates of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. The study adopted the random sampling technique to draw a sample size of 250 students.

The instrument adopted by this study for the collection of data was a questionnaire titled "Awareness and Use of Open Access Journals by LIS Undergraduates of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma". The method of data analysis used in this project was the simple percentage (%) and frequency counts as well as arithmetic mean and standard deviation with a mean score of 2.5 or above taken as 'agreed' and any mean score that is less than 2.5 taken as 'disagreed'.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Out of the two-hundred and fifty (250) copies of the questionnaire which were administered to LIS undergraduate students in Ambrose Alli University, two-hundred and thirteen (213) were filled and returned, and were considered good for analysis. This represented 85.2% return rate.

4.3 Answer to Research Questions

Section A: Awareness of Open Access Journals by LIS Undergraduates

Table 4.3.2: Awareness of Open Access Journals

S/N	Open Access Journals	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Library Philosophy and Practice (LPP)	27	6.5
2.	D-Library (Digital Library)	29	7.0
3.	Information Research (IR)	16	3.8
4.	Libri	59	14.3
5.	African Journals Online (AJOL)	202	49.0
6.	International Journal of Library and Information Science (IJLIS)	15	3.6
7.	<u>Library and Information Science Research</u>	33	8.0
8.	Journal of Information Technology	8	1.9
9.	<u>Journal of Academic Librarianship</u>	0	0
10.	<u>International Journal of Information Management</u>	23	5.5
	TOTAL	412	100

Table 4.3.2 shows the responses on the awareness of some listed open access journals. The table shows that it is only African Journals Online (AJOL) that majority of the respondents are aware of. Although, this can be concluded that there is a low level of awareness of open access journals, this conclusion is limited to the list of open access journals which is not exhaustive.

Section B: Level of Awareness of Open Access Journals among LIS undergraduates?

Table 4.3.3: Mean Ratings of Level of Awareness of Open Access Journals

S/N	Open Access Journals	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	Library Philosophy and Practice (LPP)	1.13	0.23	Low
2.	D-Library (Digital Library)	1.13	0.23	Low
3.	Information Research (IR)	1.13	0.23	Low
4.	Libri	1.13	0.23	Low
5.	African Journal (AJOL)	2.78	0.34	High
6.	International Journal of Library and Information Science (IJLIS)	1.13	0.23	Low
7.	<u>Library and Information Science Research</u>	1.13	0.23	Low
8.	Journal of Information Technology	1.09	0.21	Low
9.	<u>Journal of Academic Librarianship</u>	1.0	0	Low
10.	<u>International Journal of Information Management</u>	1.03	0.07	Low

Table 4.3.3 shows the mean ratings of level of awareness of open access journals. From the table, it can be seen that respondents indicated a high level of awareness for only Item 5. Therefore, it can be concluded that the level of awareness of African Journals Online is high while the level of awareness for the other listed journals is low.

Section C: Use of Open Access Journals by LIS Undergraduates

Table 4.3.4: Use of Open Access Journals

S/N	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	187	87.8

Table 4.3.4 shows the use of open access journals by LIS undergraduates. The table shows that majority, 187 (87.8%) of the respondents use open access journals.

Section D: Benefits of Open Access Journals to LIS Undergraduates

Table 4.3.7: Mean ratings of Benefits of Open Access Journals to LIS Undergraduates

S/N	Benefits of Using Open Access Journals	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	It provides free online access to the literature necessary for my research	2.69	0.21	Agreed
2.	It makes for easy accessibility of existing research	2.72	0.23	Agreed
3.	It provides for easy citation of works consulted	2.58	0.19	Agreed
4.	It makes referencing easy	2.58	0.19	Agreed
5.	It makes carrying out of exhaustive literature review possible	3.14	0.31	Agreed
6.	It makes self-archiving possible	1	0	Disagreed
7.	It provides me with the platform to make the existence of my completed research known through publishing	1	0	Disagreed
8.	Information in open access journals are very easy to search for	3.23	0.28	Agreed

Table 4.3.7 shows the mean ratings of benefits of open access journals to LIS undergraduates. The table shows that majority of the respondents agreed to Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8 but disagreed on Items 6 and 7. Therefore, it can be concluded that benefits of open access journals to LIS undergraduates include the provision of free online access to the literature necessary for research, ease of accessibility of existing research, provision of easy citation of works consulted, making referencing easy, making exhaustive literature review possible as well as the fact that information in open access journals are very easy to search for.

4.4 Discussion of the Findings

It was revealed that majority of the respondents are aware of only African Journals Online (AJOL) among the listed journals. Although, this can be concluded that there is a low level of awareness of open access journals, this conclusion is limited to the list of open access journals which is not exhaustive. Furthermore, this result clearly contradicts the findings of Okoye and Ejikeme (2010) who noted that majority of LIS undergraduates are aware of open access journals in different fields of study.

It was discovered that the level of awareness of African Journals Online is high while the level of awareness for the other listed journals is low. Findings also showed that majority of the respondents use open access journals. This is in agreement with the work of Lawal (2002) who discovered that majority of undergraduate students indicated that they use open access journal articles they find and download on the internet.

Also, it was revealed that majority of the respondents use open access journals in carrying out search for relevant literature for project and seminars, downloading of articles, searching of research topics/ideas for projects and seminars and bibliographic citation/referencing. This is in line with the findings of Okoye and Ejikeme (2010) who discovered that open access journals serve as useful literature for course seminars and students project research. According to the researcher, students also indicated that they find useful tips on researchable topics/areas from open access journals/articles especially from suggested areas for further studies.

Furthermore, it was found that majority of the respondents use open access journals to a high extent for carrying out search for relevant literature for project and seminars, downloading of articles, searching of research topics/ideas for projects and seminars and bibliographic citation/referencing. This is in agreement with the findings of Suber (2006) who noted that undergraduates use open access journals to a high extent for their seminars and projects.

The findings revealed that the benefits of open access journals to LIS undergraduates include the provision of free online access to the literature necessary for research, ease of accessibility of existing research, provision of easy citation of works consulted, making referencing easy, making exhaustive literature review possible as well as the fact that information in open access journals are very easy to search for. This is in agreement with the findings by Lawal (2002) who discovered that the benefits undergraduates enjoy from using open access journals include the freeness in terms of cost, ease of access to existing literature and ease in citation and referencing.

Finally, findings showed the problems LIS undergraduates face in their use of open access journals are lack of internet search skills and limited access to computer terminals. Although, this is in agreement with the work of Utulu and Bolarinwa (2009), they went further to include erratic power supply, lack of knowledge of useful open

access journals in existence as well as retrieval of too much irrelevant information which poses a problem of evaluation in itself.

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