Distance Education and the Challenges Faced by Libraries and the Way Forward

L'enseignement à Distance, Les Défis Rencontrés par les Bibliothèques et la Voie à Suivre

Angela E.Okpala
National Open University of Nigeria
angelaebele2007@yahoo.com

Adam G. Saleh
National Open University of Nigeria

Abstract

Distance education has come to stay because of its manifold benefits to both the populace and the educational sector. The advent of distance learning has ushered in significant changes such as improved access to resources, collaboration across borders, effective management of digital libraries and resources and the acquisition of new skills by practitioners. The library has been greatly transformed to meet with the demands of distance education. This research seeks to investigate the impact of distance education on libraries and the challenges faced with the aim of sensitizing libraries that are yet to embrace this new trend. It also aims at fostering solutions to issues libraries may face as a result of these changes. It was discovered that distance learning caused a revolution in the library, from its resources, services, facilities, routine library operations and core functions. Some significant impacts on the library were in the aspect of scholarly publication and digitization; information literacy and collaboration. The paper suggested that parent institutions should improve library funding. Librarians are also expected to acquire new skills which 21st century libraries demand, if they are to remain relevant. Librarians must be equipped to handle copyright and licencing issues in the library and also the issue of compliance in the organization.

Résumé

L'enseignement à distance est devenu absolument nécessaire en raison de ses nombreux avantages, tant pour la population que pour le secteur éducatif. L'avènement de l'enseignement à distance a entraîné des changements significatifs tels qu'un meilleur accès aux ressources, une collaboration transfrontalière, une gestion efficace des bibliothèques et des ressources numériques ainsi que l'acquisition de nouvelles compétences par les bibliothécaires. La bibliothèque est considérablement transformée pour répondre aux exigences de l'enseignement à distance. Cette recherche vise à examiner l'impact de l'enseignement à distance sur les bibliothèques et les défis accompagnants. On a découvert que l'enseignement à distance a provoqué une révolution dans la bibliothèque, qu'il s'agisse de ses ressources, de ses services, de ses installations, de ses opérations de routine ou de ses fonctions essentielles. L'objectif de cette recherche est de sensibiliser les bibliothèques qui n'ont pas encore adopté cette nouvelle tendance et également de trouver des solutions aux défis auxquels les bibliothèques peuvent être confrontées en raison de ces changements. Certains impacts significatifs sur les bibliothèques se situent dans le domaine de la publication et de la numérisation des ouvrages scientifiques, de la maîtrise de l'information et de la collaboration. La recherche suggère que les institutions tutelle doivent améliorer le financement des bibliothèques. On attend également des bibliothécaires qu'ils acquièrent de nouvelles compétences que les bibliothèques du 21e siècle exigent, si elles veulent rester pertinentes. Les bibliothécaires doivent être équipés pour gérer les questions de droits d'auteur et de licences dans la bibliothèque, ainsi que la conformité dans l'organisation.

Introduction

Distance education started as far back as 250 years ago as correspondence or home study (Schmetzke, 2001). This has been

defined as a mode of education access and instructional delivery, meant to engage students who are physically separated from their teachers (Sekyi, 2013). This is fundamentally different from the conventional setting, where learners have the opportunity to physically interact with their teachers. In the recent times, many institutions across the globe are joining open and distance learning (ODL) system of education due to the increasing possibilities to democratise teaching-learning process. Some factors serve as catalyst to the involvement of higher institutions in distance learning, such as:

i)   Increased Enrolment: Institutions desire to increase enrolment by attracting non-resident students. In addition, there are so many qualified students roaming the streets without admission due to low carrying capacity of conventional universities.

ii)   The Need of Adult Learners to Acquire New Skills: With the increasing workplace requirements, adults are expected to possess new skill-sets and certifications, in order to function effectively in the 21st Century Society. Many adult learners who are gainfully employed want to improve on themselves to get higher pay. These adults prefer to develop themselves while working due to much financial responsibility. Distance education, therefore, provides an appropriate platform for this category of people to acquire new skills to become relevant in their different workplaces.

iii)   Advent of New Technologies: With the introduction of new digital innovations and platforms, embarking on distance education has become quite encouraging and attractive for different categories of people in the society. New technological innovations have made it easy to participate in distance education from different parts of the world, regardless of geographical and temporal barriers. This has significantly improved the rate of enrolment in distance education (Sekyi, 2013).

Today, due to technological advancement, distance learning has moved from mailing of printed materials to desktop videoconferencing, synchronous and asynchronous facilitation. These new technologies possess capabilities to bridge the instructional gaps between learners and their tutors (Bello, 2021). The temporal and spatial barriers have been drastically reduced with the advent of technology and its impact on the instructional delivery process. For instance, online facilitation

allows for learners across the world to interact with their peers and facilitators, regardless of distance. This has been made possible due to the positive impact of technology on the operations of open and distance learning across the globe.

Librarianship is one of the fields that have been heavily affected by distance education and modern technologies. Just as there is a transition from the conventional classroom teaching and learning to an open and distance education, there exist a transition from traditional library to digital library. Hence, this has drastically changed library operations as library and information services now depend on modern technologies and approaches to cater for different categories of students within the system, especially distance learners (Khan & Raza, 2017). The digital technologies and the increasing rate of enrolment in ODL have significantly altered the way and manner library services are being provided to all categories of students within the education system. Not only that, this revolution has also changed the delivery of library services to other library users in the society. In this wise, there is now a paradigm shift in the focus and operations of library at various levels of education. Library users no longer rely on physical libraries and print resources to get information. Rather, the focus is now on electronic resources that gives users the opportunity to access library materials anywhere, anytime. This has been made possible with the affordances provided by the internet and internet-related technologies.

The library is a major learning support service that can enhance distance learning programs in higher learning institutions (Cox, 2004). Library services is as important to those learning through conventional institutions of higher education as it is for students of distance education. In this light, the Association of College and Research Libraries (2008) gave a mandate that all members of staff and students of higher institution must be able to access services and resources provided by their institutions' libraries regardless of the distance within the system. Academic staff must be granted access to use library resources and services for teaching and research. All academic libraries must, therefore ensure that they meet this standard. Access to information is an entitlement to all in higher institution and this formed the basis for Distance Education Library Services.

It has been observed that distance learners and regular students have similar library requirements. In other words, these categories of library users have almost the same expectations and requirements, while accessing library services and resources. Basically, these students are interested in using library resources for learning and research purposes. The difference may be in the manner in which library services are accessed, requested and delivered (Abbas & Faiz, 2013). A successful direct access can be measured by the rate of availability, reliability, flexibility, reliability, availability, user-friendliness and efficiency (Sacchanand, 2002). All categories of students require these criteria to effectively access and utilise library resources for learning and research purposes. This study, therefore, aimed at creating awareness about distance education, the challenges faced by libraries and the way forward.

History of Distance Learning in Nigeria

The University of Ibadan was the first to offer degree courses through distance education in Nigeria. In 1948, The University of Ibadan in collaboration with the Oxford University of the United Kingdom offered distance education through correspondence. About this period, many Nigerians sought admission into higher Institutions in the United Kingdom as correspondence students. Some others registered as external candidates for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) both Ordinary and Advanced Level of the University of London and Cambridge (Olugbemiro, 2016). Their course materials and examination questions were mailed from England, and the students equally mailed back their answers to overseas for marking. They relied mainly on the postal system since they were no radio, television, audio or video accompaniment at that time. In Africa, the Rapid Results College and Wosley Hall correspondence studies were the first set of 'organised' Distance Learning Programmes (Olugbemiro, 2016).

The use of radio & television in distance learning programmes, started soon after independence in 1960. In particular, English by Radio Programme of the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation was a National Broadcast for both primary and secondary schools. The broadcasting of the programme was done during school hours while students were expected to listen and follow the instructions given on the students' workbook provided. It was immediately followed by the Educational

Television Programmes of the then National Television of Nigeria (NTV).

At the tertiary level, in 1972, Ahmadu Bello University began the University of the Air which was also used for the Teachers In-Service Education Programme (TISEP) in 1975. The University of Lagos also began distance learning in 1974 with the Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (COSU) which later became the Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSIT). This was in response to the growing demand of working adults for self- development in line with the global trends.

In 1978, the National Teachers Institute (NTI), located in Kaduna, in response to the need to fill the massive vacuum of qualified and trained teachers, established the distance learning mode and in July 1983, the Act to establish National Open University received presidential assent under Act, no 6 of 1983 thus giving the university legal basis for its existence. Unfortunately, in April 1984, the operation of the University was suspended. In March 2002 however, the university was resuscitated. NOUN has over 78 study centres round the federation and has enrolled about 476,047 students and graduated over 58,000 students. NOUN offers about 48 undergraduate programmes and 38 postgraduate programmes at postgraduate diploma, masters and doctoral levels. Also, the University through its Centre for Human Resources Development in Kaduna State offers short-term vocational training to artisans including prison inmates.

The Impact of Distance Education on Libraries
Distance education has made tremendous impact on the library. For instance, distance education exposed the library to technology integration and the needs to build resources in different formats to enable them provide access to their resources no matter the geographical location and time. Libraries now acquire computers; have electronic catalogues, internet facilities and resources in multimedia formats etc. In fact, the increase in student enrolment in distance learning programmes has made online resources very important. Also associations such as the American Library Association and the Association of College and Research Libraries became concerned on how best to serve distance learners and came up with standards. In 2006 ACRL came up with three recommendations that libraries must meet in order to achieve the necessary transformation that will help them remain

relevant. The recommendations are:

1) It is important for libraries to gradually shift from print-based media to a more user-centered media through the integration of appropriate technologies.

2) The libraries and personnel offering library services need to change their focus from custodian and control of learning resources to a service-oriented platform, which helps to make library resources readily available for all categories of users within the education system.

3) Libraries need to spread their services beyond the education setting, with a view to capturing other relevant users in different organisations.

Also in line with best practice for distance education, Ammerman (2004) pointed out three factors that libraries need to address as they move into the future. These factors include:

i) changes should be made in scholarly publication and digital information including cooperative arrangements for distributed collections.

ii) Globalization especially made possible by technology including providing library services to those at a distance.

iii) Collaborative models of scholarship and pedagogy both physical and technological infrastructure.

Changes in Scholarly Publication and the Digitization
As earlier mentioned, the primary responsibility of library is to make its services and resources available to its users notwithstanding the physical location. With this mandate onus is on the library to provide education materials in a variety of formats besides printed books. More so online access to information resources has the capacity to minimize the difference between residential users and users at a distance because once these resources become available electronically, distance learners can access them anytime, anywhere. In fact, the ultimate goal of all libraries now should be to make all materials available to both on site and distance learners resulting in a shift from print to electronic resources. In line with this shift, hard copies of old theses and other important intellectual resources are being digitized to promote accessibility. Most institutions established their own repositories where such digitized theses and other research works internally generated are preserved and disseminated.

The availability of Academic and Research Libraries has made subscriptions to the internet resources such as online databases and Journals cheaper for institutions compared to having individual library subscription. Library users both local & remote therefore, should have a wide range of e-information resources. Also with the application of ICT in library and information services, users can have timely information which promotes academic work and increase research productivity (Thanuskochi, 2012).

The advent of online resources and information technology has also led to a shift in staff roles. In the past the work of a librarian was mostly centred on specific task such as cataloguing, reference, and circulation. The modern librarian no longer has the luxury of focusing on a single, specific task. The convergence that has come as part of the digitization movement has in turn empowered the librarian to break the shackles of task-orientation and has shifted the emphasis to the user (Groeling & Boyd, 2009). The librarian today can offer direct assistance to the user in locating needed information, no matter the format. The focus is on customer service.

In this new trend, academic libraries are creating positions for distance-education (DE) librarians to cater for specific needs of distance learners, faculties that teach distance courses, and the programmes. According to some researchers (Arif & Mahmood, 2012) there are three roles of a librarian in digital age: (1) Proactive enhanced service provider (2) Copyright/ Licensing expert (3) system interface designer.

Distance librarians (DL) work as system interface designers and are involved in developing virtual libraries and specialized materials such as online tutorials and web pages for distance learners. DL contact and work closely with faculties that teach distance – learning courses in order to promote library usage and instruction. They may serve as technology advisers and assist faculties in incorporating technology into the instructional design of their web based courses (Nagarkar & Muvari, 2010). They can also help faculties to navigate copyright and fair use issues as they pertain to electronic resources and web based courses and assist them in designing assignments that are feasible in the distance learning environment (Ramaiah, 2014).

In addition, DL serve as links between various support services e.g computing units to ensure convenient and reliable access to electronic databases for distance learners, and negotiate reciprocal borrowing contracts with other libraries to facilitate access to materials for distance learners (Mahesh & Adithyakumarih, 2016).

To effectively carryout these functions, DL are expected to possess traditional skills such as reference, collection development, and library instruction which must be supplemented with in-depth knowledge of the internet and World Wide Web; knowledge of technology and electronic licensing. They also need to possess soft skills such as flexibility, time management, ability to negotiate, work collaboratively, and communicate with a diverse clientele. All these skills can be acquired through formal education such as library schools and while on the job, through attending workshops, conferences etc.

Information Literacy Due to Globalization and Technology
Globalization has made possible an opened frontier of information across borders. There is a need for information literacy which equips individuals with skills that will enable them access information globally. In fact, individuals need information literacy skills to perform effectively in today's global society. These skills are important to effectively search for information and other resources that are relevant in the modern society. Thus, individuals without the skills for information may find it difficult to function efficiently in this society, where technology has made the world to become a global village.

Also, with the increasing effect of globalisation and technology, a significant number of distance learners worldwide are now being given another opportunity to get additional qualifications through open and distance learning. Many individuals, who left the education system for one reason or the other, are now finding their ways back into the system as a result of the opportunities provided by distance learning for all categories of people in the society. It should be mentioned that many of these adults moving back into the school setting are only familiar with text-based or print-based resources for instructional activities. This could make it difficult for them to function effectively in this modern learning terrain. Therefore, there should be deliberate efforts at ensuring

that the needs and expectations of these adults are taken into considerations in the planning and implementations of any library policies in the modern library setting.

The advent of information technologies has resulted to information explosion, where students have access to more information than what they even require. Therefore, students now rely largely on search engines for their information needs in order to navigate and manage the enormous information they face globally (Lincoln, 2004). In most cases, students are comfortable using Google and are not knowledgeable in the use of advance search techniques. This may be due to the fact that globally, Google is regularly used by them for mundane tasks and as such Google is erroneously regarded as sufficient for academic/ research processes. This reliance upon Google alone is an obvious indication of unfamiliarity with other research options available and thus the need for information literacy.

The information explosion has created challenges in the management of information among different categories of users. For instance, the search engines do not necessarily index many web resources sometimes called the "hidden resources" while users search for information on the internet (Bergman, 2001). When users are searching for information through Google search, there is a possibility that these hidden resources will not be available for use. This will the users the opportunity of getting the required information for adequate decision-making process in an organisation. Therefore, the onus lies of the stakeholders in library systems to ensure that available digital resources are properly managed, such that so users can easily find the required information with high level of promptness and accuracy. They should also train users through information literacy programmes and bring to their attention, those resources that are outside of the "normal" Google sphere. When this is done, users will be able to adequately utilise library resources for instructional and other purposes.

Collaborative Models of Scholarship and Pedagogy
With the advent of technology and the increasing digitization of resources, there are now more opportunities for collaboration and teamwork. The global connectivity created by the internet has given impetus to the exchange of ideas and information across the globe. As a

result of this, cooperation and collaboration are being promoted among higher institutions of learning across the globe. The high of interconnectivity enabled by the internet is facilitating cooperation and collaboration between individuals and institutions, especially through the use of email, Twitter, Face book, WhatsApp and Instagram. These information sharing platforms affords people the opportunity to exchange ideas and collaborate in various areas of needs. Individuals in the society can freely interact using these platforms and get adequate feedback that will assist them in decision-making process. It should be noted that this was not possible before the advent of the internet and other internet-related technologies.

These opportunities provided by the internet have dramatically changed the operations in the library services. Libraries across the globe can now collaborate and exchange learning resources through different internet platforms. The exchange of ideas and flow of information is guaranteed with the capabilities provided by the internet. This could not have been possible, if libraries were still operating separately as usually obtainable before the advent of new technologies. The implication is that the internet has altered the mode of operations in the libraries across higher institutions of learning and librarians are now increasingly relying on these new technologies to exchange materials. This is done regardless of the physical distance within the system. As a result of this, the library system now provides access to more information and resources than what was obtainable before the advent of the internet. Now, library users have access to more information and resources for different purposes.

Another strategic impact of the internet on the library system is the ability for librarians to collaborate and exchange ideas to improve library services. The internet has the capabilities to promote information flow from one area to another. Therefore, librarians now have the opportunity to exchange new ideas and innovations with their counterparts across higher institutions. This promotes cross-fertilisation of ideas and collaboration among the library professionals.
Within the institution there are other occasions for collaboration brought about by the technological changes. Libraries for instance can partner with the teaching faculties to teach and serve as embedded librarians for some courses. These academic librarians provide added value to teaching and learning process.

Types of E- Resources and Library Services

The electronic resources are increasingly becoming integral parts of the library system, as they promote access to information among library users. The electronic resources can be accessed by the users anytime, anywhere (Kenchakkanavar, 2014). This makes it possible to use information for various purposes and to solve societal problems. Therefore, libraries across the globe are now investing largely on the E-resources to cater for the increasing needs of the various categories of users, especially the Net-generation users. It should be noted that students in the 21st Century relate positively with anything that has to do with technology. In fact, the only language they understand is technology. The e-resources give users, especially students, the opportunity to access information on their mobile phones and computers. This has been enabled with the power of the internet, which provides access regardless of distance and time barriers. The e-resources include library resources like electronic journals, textbooks, magazines and so on. These resources are domiciled on the internet and can be accessed by the users across the world for different purposes.

E-Resources have several advantages. In particular, they enable the librarian to provide better service to their diverse users. Below are other advantages of electronic resources:

a. An electronic document can be viewed by several users simultaneously. In this sense it is cost – effective and cost-efficient because there is no need to produce multiple copies and they have the ability of being reused.

b. E-Resources can be searched and found easily/ quickly using available search engines. More so there is an increased access as documents are always available. Documents cannot be borrowed by one user while depriving other users; they are not subject to theft and mutilation. Users' time is saved.

c. Storage space is saved with e-resources yet users can have access to large amount of information.

d. Internet Resources are created in the following file format: audio, text, video and images. Users are at liberty to learn using their preferred

format.

e. Electronic contents can easily be reproduced, forwarded, modified/updated

f. The e-environment enables libraries to collaborate and share their resources. In other words, it fosters resource sharing.

There are different types of e-resources. Some of the most common e-resources are: multimedia products, e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers, e-magazines, databases, etc.

Library Services in an ODL Institution
The most common types of services offered by library to ODL students are almost exclusively electronic. A researcher (Raraigh-Hopper, 2010) outlined the most common services offered by libraries to distance learners as: online information literacy tutorials, remote access to online library catalogue, Ask-A-Librarian (chat, e–mail, or telephone), electronic research guides on academic and special interest topics, electronic general library guides, interlibrary loan, electronic reserves, and document delivery services. It is important to note that in all of these services, reference and instructional librarians are the sources of help for both distance and on–campus students. These librarians are expected to be thorough in providing library services to their clients as greater attention is necessary to serve the unique needs of ODL students (Whitehurst & Willis, 2009). In fact, the factors that make ODL an attractive option for students, such as age, income, or family and work obligations, are the same factors that make ODL a challenge for both students and support staff. Distance education accommodates a greater diversity of students which can make providing library services a greater challenge. For most ODL students who are not computer literate, the shift in technology which provides the means for them to take classes and use the electronic library is a source of great challenge (Whitehurst and Willis, 2009).
The Internet has covered almost all aspects of the library activities and is playing pivotal role in libraries service delivery. It has changed how libraries are organized and managed. It has also changed how library information are disseminated. The Internet has indeed made it easy and effective for libraries to access both the local and distance users.

Electronic Library Services

It is important to note that the internet is having significant impact on the operations of libraries at different levels of education. Library services can now be provided electronically and users have access to these services and resources from the comfort of their homes. There are a lot of services that can be provided to the users via the internet. These services are discussed below:

Membership Registration: The purpose of this service is to allow users borrow items and access services from the library's network. The template for registration is available on the library's website.

Access to Online Library Catalogue: This is one of the critical library services that can be provided electronically. In different countries of the world, libraries resources are accessed by users with the use of internet and internet-related technologies. Library users can have access to online library catalogues. On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is the most modern form of catalogue that allows all bibliographic records of all documents in the library to be stored in the computer memory disk. OPAC is the most efficient of all the catalogues because of its flexibility in updating records and the fact that records can be accessed through several points. Also, it provides rapid search. This service is available 24hours to distance learners.

Resource Sharing/ Inter library loan: The electronic resources provide opportunity for libraries to collaborate and share resources that could be utilised by different categories of users. It should be mentioned that a particular library might be able to provide all the required resources to the users. In other words, such library will have to collaborate with other libraries and get these materials for the users. There is therefore an increasing need for libraries to cooperate and exchange information and resources. Libraries need to share resources to ensure free flow of information within the system. The Internet has enhanced networking of libraries in different geographical locations. Libraries round the globe can share resources easily with the Internet/www.This is particularly useful in libraries in the face of decreasing budgets. These networks provide navigational tools and associated services which can be used by libraries to access remote

resources for browsing, searching and even downloading. Networking has helped the library to maximize the utilization of existing information resources by sharing and providing speedy access to information resources located at different places through communication channels.

Lending/Reservation service: This service is available to distance learners who want to borrow or have a book reserved. Borrower's form may be made available online on the library's website. On request the borrowed materials can be delivered to users by speed post. This saves the library users the stress and time of having to physically visit the library before a book can be borrowed. In order to know what book to borrow, the user may check the electronic catalogues. For example, open access catalogue (OPAC) is an electronic catalogue that can be search by subject, title, or author etc.

Reservation service is also available online to distance users. Reservation form is available on the library's website. Users can apply for books on loan to be reserved for them on return. This service is very important in academic and school libraries because there are some materials that are heavily used and always on loan that may not be available in electronic format.

Reference Service/Ask-A-Librarian: This can be described as a personal assistance provided usually by the librarian to library users, who are in need of information for various purposes (Ramos-Eclevia, 2012). Ask – a-librarian module on the library's website handles all queries from distance learners. Reference services have been strengthened by the advent of new technologies and internet platforms that allow users to seek for information and search for resources from different parts of the world. The implication is that users can now inquire about library resources without physically visiting the library. This can easily be done via the internet. The librarian can use online chat to interact with the users across the world about their requests and expectations. The outcome of the interaction will determine what source(s) in the library or outside the library (other libraries) that can be used in order to provide answers to the queries. Queries can also be answered by phone.

Current Awareness Service: This kind of service involves the review

of publications almost immediately at receipt, which promotes the selection of information pertinent to the organization, and recording individual items to be brought to the attention of those persons whose work are related (Cabonero, Tindaan, Attaborn & Manat, 2019). This service aims at keeping users abreast with recent information in their areas of specialisation or interest. The reference librarian achieves this by collating all latest documents and by using users' profile. Electronic copies of materials such as preprints of papers, photocopy of table of contents, periodicals routings, library bulletins, can be sent to users by email. The electronic version of library's recently published accession lists/ acquisition list containing bibliographic details of new materials just acquired can also be sent to users. Current Awareness Services (CAS) has been made easy with Internet and multimedia. It has enabled the librarian to easily send a list (update) of new arrivals with their cover pages to all library users.

Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)/ Document Delivery Service: SDI service is a personalized service which is unlike the current awareness service that is a group service. For SDI, the library staff, on a regular basis, searches through a mass of literature from which bibliographic details of those that are of interest to a particular user are selected and are made available to him/her by email. In order to achieve this, the librarian must keep a collection of all the research profiles of users. Also, library users can have access to the electronic copies of any document of their choice through document delivery services made possible through the internet. Most electronic copies are richer than their print versions because some have integrated video, audio etc. On request documents that are originally in print form can be digitized or scanned and delivered through e-mail, post or courier to users at any location for a fee. This service is very beneficial to distance learners.

User Education/Online Information Literacy Tutorials: It equips the users with in-depth knowledge of how to use the library thus serves as a guide in the use of library resources. Library education and orientation can be made possible through the multimedia library information kiosks/walk –through programmes for their users (Wani, 2019). Since this programme can be made available to users on the web, users can access them and learn at their own pace, anytime and from anywhere. Also, with online group chats and videoconferencing library education

has become more effective.

Challenges and the Way Forward
There are some challenges that hinder distance learners from accessing library resources and electronic resources. On the part of library administration, there are also challenges that if not addressed can hinder library/information service delivery. Some of the challenges identified by Tripathi & Jeevan (2008); Mirza & Mahmood (2012) are:

Geographic Barriers: The distance learners are dispersed along the length and breadth of the country and this has prevented them from having easy access to library resources/services (Tripathi & Jeevan, 2008). The study recommended an equitable information access to distance learners just like their contemporaries on campus. In addition, distance learning libraries should explore modern information technologies in their service delivery.

Technology Barrier: This is one of the critical challenges to the effective utilisation of e-resources within the library system. There are various technological challenges that inhibit the use of the Internet by both librarians and library users. For distance learners to have access to digital library anywhere and at any time, technology has an essential role to play (Barnhart & Stanfield, 2011). In open and distance learning, this challenge is complicated by the physical separation between learners and their teachers. To effectively interact within the system, distance learners require unrestricted access to the internet and internet-related technologies. However, library users and distance learners in particular, are faced with the challenge of poor internet access occasioned by low bandwidth. This implies that distance learners and even their teachers will find it difficult to effectively interact and exchange information as a result of poor internet access. Inability to access internet will limit the intervention of technology in the ODL system. This challenge is more prevalent in Africa and other developing countries of the world where technical and infrastructural facilities are limited to boost internet access and promote interconnectivity. It is important to note that provision of internet access requires huge investment and political will, which are not usually within the reach of many developing countries of the world, especially in the Africa region.

Lack of Awareness: According to Aina (2014) and Swigon (2011), some library users lack the knowledge of the databases their libraries subscribe to. Librarians should learn to market their well packaged resources and services to their patrons. Information literacy and orientation programmes should be regularly organized for library users. Also, Libraries with the support of their parent institutions should advertise their services through the radio, television, website, social media and handbills/posters.

Insufficient funds: Decreasing budgets and inadequate funding have remained the inhibiting factors to the effective operations of libraries at various levels of education (Cohen & Burkhardt, 2010). In this wise, libraries across the world are finding it difficult to provide adequate technological resources that will enable users access resources anytime, anywhere. This is affecting access to library resources by the students, especially those who learn at a distance. Unless libraries are provided with adequate funding and resources, it will be difficult to cater for the diverse learning needs of distance learners. Therefore, stakeholders in library needs to ensure adequate provision of funds that will allow libraries cater for the needs and expectations of different categories of users, especially distance learners.

Copyright: Researchers (McCabe, 2009; Ramaiah, 2014) believe that technology has created easier and simpler ways of cheating. The nature of the plagiarism problem has been heightened in recent years by the growth in web technology. Digital or electronic technologies create new opportunities for students to have convenient access to massive electronic library resources, this technologies at the same time help open up the possibility of students' problematic behaviour, such as massive downloading or even copyright-law violation (Igudia & Hamzat, 2016). If this is not checked, it could lead to dearth of original creative works. Also, if students are not aware of the implications of copyright infringement especially on the Internet, then it cast doubt on the credibility of the outcome of their research (McCabe, 2009). The librarian must understand how to legally use licensed content and also create awareness to avoid infringements by library users. Copyright notice can be posted near computer terminals, or it should appear prior to granting access to the content. The librarian must also understand licensing language and negotiate licensing agreements.

Conclusion

Higher education involvement in distance learning has come to stay. Libraries now employ integrated technologies in their operations and service delivery. Information resources are provided in various formats. Library users have access to information globally. Also, cooperation and partnership are enhanced on individual, professional and institutional basis across borders. There is a paradigm shift in librarians' roles and its associated challenges. For instance, there is the issue of copyright and licensing of contents amongst others. The librarian must create awareness to avoid infringements and he must also be knowledgeable in licensing of electronic contents and acquire all the necessary skills a 21st century librarian needs.

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