

Awareness and Utilization of The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library by Academic Staff: A Case Study of University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria

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***Abstract:** This study examines the awareness and utilization of The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) database resources by the academic staff at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria. A questionnaire was distributed to two-hundred academic staff members that were randomly selected for the study. The findings show that 57.8% of the respondents were aware of TEEAL and that 33% used it when necessary. The study also identifies electricity problem and poor internet connectivity as hindrances to their utilization of this electronic resource.*

I. Introduction

Electronic resources have affected the functioning of libraries and the information seeking habit of users (Tenopir, 2005). Resources at today's library are not only available in print but also in electronic format. CD-ROM technology has enabled libraries to provide instant, easy, and convenient access to a substantial amount of relatively current and retrospective information at a fixed or predictable cost. Due to the availability of CD-ROM databases, libraries have reported an increase in the use of journal collections, interlibrary loans services, and microfiche collections.

The level of quality of an institution of higher education is determined to a great extent by that of its library, that is, by the adequacy of its collections of books, journals, other research materials, and services. The University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB) in Nigeria was established in January, 1988. Started with two colleges and the university library, the University has now

grown in strength to comprise of eight colleges: College of Natural Science (COLNAS), College of Plant Science and Crop Production (COLPLANT), College of Animal Science and Livestock Production (COLANIM), College of Engineering (COLENG), College of Veterinary Medicine, College of Environmental Resources Management (COLERM), College of Agricultural Management and Rural Development (COLAMRUD), and College of Food Science and Human Ecology (COLFHEC).

UNAAB's roles are to emphasize teaching, research, and extension services. The provision of print and non-print information resources gears to facilitate the attainment of the institutional objectives. The library automation system has terminals in all sections connected to a main server. It has sixty dedicated PCs for internet browsing and electronic search at its Learning Resources Centre. The library subscribes to a few electronic journals on CD-ROM or online. Prominent among these is "The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library" (TEEAL), otherwise known as "Library in a box". It is a full-text database that provides instant access to about 140 of the world's most important scholarly agricultural journals. The database makes it possible for libraries in resource poor countries to have access to relatively current agricultural journals in CD-ROM format. However, electronic resources adoption and usage have their associated issues, especially so in Nigeria, which hinder an effective utilization of e-resources, affect the attitude of users towards e-resources, and make them prefer the traditional print information resources.

This study aims to assess the awareness and use of TEEAL by academic staffs at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

II. Literature Review

Watts and Ibegbulam (2006) examined some of the barriers to the usage of electronic information resources available at the medical library of College of Medicine, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their findings reveal that lack of an adequate ICT (information and communication technology) infrastructure and affordable online access, absence of in-depth ICT skills and information searching skills among library staff, and cost of using the cybercafé are barriers to the use of electronic resources. In the same vein, Ondari-Okenwa, (2004) Ashcroft and Watts (2005), Okiy (2005), Adomi (2005), and Oduwole and Sowole (2006) identified

problems in the adoption and usage of ICT and e-resources in Nigeria. These include lack of adequate ICT skills among staff and users, low basic information literacy levels in the Nigerian population, and prohibitive cost in developing countries to gain access to internet through cybercafé.

Lenares (1999) identified the reasons why his respondents preferred print sources as easier to read, better graphic quality, easier to browse, and easier to access. Palmer and Saddler (2003) reported that their respondents expressed desire for print information sources because they are considered proven archival sources. Other reasons the print information sources are preferred to online sources are: ability to browse and scan through pages, portability, physical comfort, and conveniences. However, in a more recent study on students' preference of journal format, print, CD-ROM or online, conducted at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Salaam (2007) found that the users preferred the CD-ROM databases, particularly the TEEAL, to other media.

Evans and Zarnosky (2000) described electronic resources in libraries as mixed blessing. Electronic resources are popular because they provide more flexibility in searching than their paper –based counterpart, and they can be accessed remotely at anytime. However, electronic resources do not reduce library operating cost and present new challenges for staff. Moreover, electronic system can fail as a result of inadequate power supplies. Waiting for files to download, waiting to have a server to accept your query or being abruptly cut off in mid-session are sources of frustration that do not exist with paper-based resources. On the other hand, torn-out articles, miss-shelved or missing volumes, or library holiday gaps are not issues with the electronic resources, provided offline access to the required system is available.

III. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the awareness and extent of utilization of The Essential Electronic Agricultural (TEEAL) database by the academic staff at the University of Agriculture Library, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To know if academic staff were aware of TEEAL.
- To find out the extent of use of TEEAL by academic staff in UNAAB.

- To find out the opinion of academic staff on assessment of TEEAL resources.
- To determine the effectiveness of TEEAL in the research quest by academic staff.

IV. Research Methodology

A survey was used for this study. A questionnaire was designed to gather information on academic staff's awareness and usage of TEEAL. The questionnaire asks the respondents, if they are aware of the TEEAL, how frequently they use it, for what purpose they use it, and what obstacles there are to its usage.

Out of the four hundred and nineteen (419) academic staff in the University, 200 (two hundred) from each of the colleges were randomly sampled, using the simple random technique (SRT). 187 (93.5%) questionnaires were properly completed and returned.

V. Analysis and Interpretation Data

1. Profiles of Respondents

The data collected shows that there are more male respondents (86.1%) than female respondents (13.9%). This implies that there are more male academic staff than female across the various colleges surveyed at the University.

Table 1: Educational qualification of respondents

Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
M.Sc	39	20.9
M.Agric	32	17.1
M.V.Sc	20	10.7
PhD	96	51.3
Total	187	100.0

Table 1 shows that the majority of the academic staff (51.3%) hold a doctorate degree. This may be due to the nature of the institution as a university of agriculture and the employment standards set by the National University Commission (NUC).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by college

College	Frequency	Percentage (%)
COLAMRUD	23	12.3
COLFHEC	21	11.2
COLNAS	33	17.6
COLERM	23	12.3
COLPLANT	28	15.1
COLENG	14	7.5
COLANIM	27	14.4
COLVET	18	9.6
Total	187	100.0

Table 2 shows that the highest percentage of respondents is from COLNAS (17.6%).

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of TEEAL usage

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Once a week	16	8.5
Twice a week	8	4.2
Thrice a week	12	6.4
Four times a week	10	5.34
Five times a week	14	10.3
When necessary	65	34.7
Never	62	33.15
Total	187	100.0

Table 3 shows that 34.7% of the respondents use TEEAL when necessary. Reasons that most respondents have attributed to their usage of TEEAL resources include research and publication needs (73.4. %), references for their lectures (58.9%), and reading to be abreast of current trend in their various field of research (60.2%). One reason for not using TEEAL is that only 108 (57.75%) of the respondents were aware of the electronic resources. 34.2% of respondents claimed that they preferred the hardcopy of journals to electronic format and that other demand on their time have prevented their exploration of electronic resources. This supports the findings of Johnston C (1998).

Table 4: Rating of TEEAL CD-ROM in their areas of research

Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I find it easy to search for citations and abstracts in TEEAL.	89 (47.8%)	54 (28.9%)	24 (12.8%)	20 (10.7%)
Using TEEAL improves the quality of my work.	88 (47.0%)	49 (26.2%)	30 (16.0%)	20 (10.9%)
I am able to use the TEEAL index whenever I need it.	95 (50.8%)	13 (6.5%)	34 (18.2%)	45 (5.9%)
I am knowledgeable in the topics I search for in TEEAL.	97 (51.9%)	11 (5.9%)	43 (23.0%)	36 (19.3%)
TEEAL provides up-to-date information in my areas of interest.	97 (51.9%)	11 (.5.9%)	42 (22.5%)	35 (18.7%)

Table 4 shows that 47.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that they find it easy to use TEEAL. 47.0% believe that TEEAL has improved the quality of their work. 51.9% thinks that TEEAL contains up-to-date information. And 50.8% are able to use the index whenever needed. This is not surprising because the index to TEEAL has been installed on the laptops and desk computers of the majority of the academic staff that have requested for it in the University. The searching is done in their offices or rooms. They only come to the library when they need to print full-text of articles.

The analysis of the data collected shows that the major constraint to the use of TEEAL is the unstable supply of electricity. This problem of poor electricity supply or power failure was also reported by Chisenga(1997) and Owolabi and Agboola (2010) in their study as the biggest problem facing the use of ICT facilities in most African institutions.

On the positive side, the respondents believe that TEEAL and other electronic resources make it possible for them to access more easily information from different sources, which helps enormously with their research.

On the negative side, the respondents complain that TEEAL offers only a limited number of journals published in Africa. This corroborates the finding on this same subject matter by Oduwole and Sowole (2006). They also identified lack of content in some subject areas and copyright implications.

VI. Conclusion

A large number of academic staff was not aware of the existence of TEEAL in the library. Hence the result of its usage is not encouraging. However, the respondents do found it easy to use TEEAL; which contains up-to-date information and, which in turn, has improved the quality of their work.

It is important for the library to improve the awareness of TEEAL in the library by the academic community so as to increase the usage of this service. Awareness and orientation should be a continuous effort, since the University recruits new staff on a regular basis. The University Library should find an alternative way to generate power supply such as a standby generator, inverter or solar energy system.

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