

## **Internet Usage and Regulations in Niger Delta University Libraries**

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***Abstrac.:** The study examines the Internet usage and regulations in Niger Delta University Libraries. The descriptive research design was used for this study. 404 Internet users were randomly selected from the libraries on three campuses of Niger Delta University. The questionnaire method of data collection was employed and complemented by interviews. Findings of the study are: the Internet services in the library are functional and accessible to all users. There are no Internet regulations in the libraries. The Internet services in the library are not geared only toward educational purpose but patrons use it for other personal activities and visiting other websites as well. It is recommended that there should be an Internet regulation policy in the library. These regulations will guide students on the use of the Internet. Students should be given passwords in order to gain access to the Internet so that its usage can be monitored.*

### **I. Introduction**

The Internet, as an information source, is uniquely important to the library. It allows the library to provide information beyond the confines of its own collections. Libraries provide the Internet access to support the teaching, learning, and research activities. However, information on the Internet may be outdated, biased, inaccurate, unreliable or restricted for access. Good

information consumers evaluate the validity of information found on the Internet, just as they do with print materials.

Library patrons use the Internet to retrieve and disseminate information. While the Internet offers rich information to develop ourselves professionally, academically, and culturally, it should not be misused in any form. Facilities in the library should only be used to support the educational, research, and administrative goals of the university. Patrons are encouraged to use the Internet to advance their research and to reduce frustration and dilemma in search for information resources. However there are cases that users may not be able to access a given site on the Internet due to circumstances beyond the control of the library.

In the early 1990s, the library was the major source of information embodied in books and journals, which were often outdated. Other complemented sources were lecture notes, photocopied materials, seminars, and conference papers. With the advent of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructures such as the Internet, e-mails, and the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM), librarians, lecturers, students, researchers, and non academic staff no longer have to travel far to retrieve information. Neither do they rely on print materials only. The sharing of knowledge among students and lecturers has been made possible through the Internet.

## **II. Literature Review**

With the advent of the Internet, people, organizations, and businesses are better informed and connected to each other than ever before. Information that once took several processes and procedures to obtain is now readily available. ICTs are available in Nigerian university libraries, but if not used properly, the benefits derived in library services will be minimal, and will not justify the reasons of making the ICTs available (Emojorho & Nwalo, 2009).

The Internet has a lot of promises for educational achievements for young people but certain drawbacks such as fraud, currency counterfeiting, theft of intellectual property, pornography, recipes for crime, and infecting systems with virus are also associated with the Internet.

Rajani and Chandio (2004) said that youngsters frequently visit pornographic websites and also the tendency of learning abusive languages are common among them due to their online friends.

Rumbough (2001) further observed that college students use the Internet to cheat each other and indulge in bad activities. The use of the Internet has intensified the fraudulent act of the fraudsters in ripping people of their hard-earned wealth. Therefore, cybercafés have been shut down in some part of Lagos in Nigeria as a means of curbing cyber crimes (Tiemo & Charles-Iyoha, 2008). They, however, argued that closing down cybercafés would do more harm than good.

Lazarinis (2010) posited that young people access the Internet from numerous places -- home, libraries, schools, and the Internet cafes. Some studies have shown that there is a number of potential online risks for students using the Internet.

Tiemo and Charles-Iyoha (2008) observed that those engaged in the Internet fraud in Nigeria include secondary-school students, and undergraduate and graduate students in universities or other higher institutions. Recently, five undergraduate students of the University of Abuja and University of Port-Harcourt were arrested for allegedly using the Internet to access the sites of some banks and transferring money from other people's accounts into their own (Aborisade, 2009). Thus, cybercafés, if not registered or adequately regulated, could serve as a means to those bent on committing cyber crimes.

The Internet regulation is basically restricting or controlling access to certain aspects of information. The Internet regulation consists of mainly two categories: data censorship and the Internet access control. Most of the Internet regulations are imposed by the government in an effort to protect the best interests of the general public, which is a form of censorship. The other form of the Internet regulation is domain registration, that is, through the Internet Protocol (IP) address control. At the time of purchasing a domain, the webmaster's address has to be registered (123HelpMe.com, 2009).

To ensure that computers and the Internet usage are regulated in the library, it requires a login, using a university-assigned email address and personal password. In accordance with the library's mission, computers are provided for the purpose of research and other educational endeavors. Therefore, excessive recreational use of computers (e.g., game-playing) is entirely personal and unrelated to information-gathering (e.g., chat-room and personal email). Using computers in the library for the purpose of private financial gains (e.g. conducting business, eBay) is inappropriate. The Library reserves the right to require, at any time, that a computer user engaged in such activities cease doing so (Oboler Library, 2009). For any library patrons to use the Internet in the library, he or she must have a password to log in for authentication. Authentication is the process of determining the validity of a user. In other words, authorization is the process of determining what resources a user is permitted to access (Shoeb & Sobhan, 2010).

Antón (2007) stated the following different authorization methods. The most common and familiar authentication process is login ID and password-based access. Login is also called log on, sign in, or sign on, which identifies oneself to the system in order to obtain access. The primary use of a computer login procedure is to authenticate the identity of any computer user or computer software attempting to access the computer's services. Another popular authentication process is IP filtering or IP authentication. This process is a packet filter that analyzes TCP/IP packets. That is software routine that analyzes incoming data packets and forwards or discards them based on one or more criteria such as address, range of addresses, and types.

Furthermore, the Internet has some negative and as well as positive effects. It has greatly changed research and learning in the developing nations. Ojedokun (2001) posited that the Internet has many benefits in the academic cycle, including provision of round-the-clock access to a wide variety of information sources globally and the ability to discuss and share experience with colleagues.

Fatoki (2004) investigated the impact of library resources and the Internet among undergraduate students in Ibadan and found that 65% of the students use the Internet for research work while 35% do not use the Internet for research work. His findings also revealed that 72% of students preferred to use the university library's Internet services, 35% the cybercafé, and 5% neither.

Igun (2006) conducted a research on the use of the Internet resources in Delta State University, Nigeria. It was shown that the majority of the respondents (95%) reported that the use of the Internet had improved their teaching and research.

Audu (2006) conducted a study on the Internet availability to postgraduate students at University of Nigeria, Nsukka. It was discovered that 100% use the Internet for browsing.

Anunobi (2006) surveyed students' use of the Internet facilities in the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. It showed that 87.41% use the Internet and 4.67% did not indicated using the Internet.

Osunade and Ojo (2006) studied the usage of library and the Internet in University of Ibadan. Their study revealed that the numbers of students who use the Internet are more than those who use the library.

Salako and Tiamiyu (2007) investigated the use of search engines for research by students and found that 78.3% of the respondents had been using the Internet for more than 24 months before commencing their postgraduate programmes.

Obuh (2007) surveyed on the utilization of the Internet services by undergraduate students at University of Benin, Delta State University, and Igbinedion University in Nigeria. The findings showed that 93.83% of the students are of the opinion that the Internet is time saving as compared to finding documents in the traditional way.

Azubogu and Madu (2007) carried out a study on the use of computer and the Internet technology in Imo State University, Owerri. It was gathered that 89.1% use the computer and the Internet in accessing information materials while 10.9% did not make use of such.

From the forgoing, a gap in knowledge is observed by the researchers, which needs to be filled by this present study. Also the study noticed that, it seem that there are no recent literature that documents the Internet usage and regulations in academic libraries in Nigeria. Therefore, there is a critical need for documentation in this area as a way of advancing the Internet usage and regulation. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap in knowledge by providing an insight into the Internet usage and regulations among students in academic libraries in Nigeria.

### **III. Statement of the Problem**

The Internet has made changes in the educational achievement in universities in developing and developed nations. It has bridged the gap of communications. However, certain undesired outcomes such as fraud, theft of intellectual property, pornography, infecting systems with viruses are also associated with the Internet. Such undesired outcomes have negative effectives on students, especially on heavy users, which can affect their academic performance (Hanson, 2005). In some universities in Nigeria, there are no regulations guiding the usage of electronic information resources in the library. As a result, some students explore the Internet in a negative way rather than availing themselves with the vast educational resources online.

### **IV. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the current study are as follows:

1. To find out if there are Internet services in the Niger Delta University Libraries
2. To know if there are Internet usage regulations
3. To find out if the Internet is used only for educational goals
4. To determine the extent in which the Internet usage regulations are implemented

In order to guide the researchers in this study, the following questions were designed:

1. Are there Internet services in Niger Delta University libraries?
2. Are there Internet usage regulations in the libraries?
3. Are Internet services in these libraries used for educational purpose?

4. To what extent are Internet usage regulations implemented in the libraries?

## V. Scope of the Study

The study was conducted on the three campuses of the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, South-South, Nigeria: the main University campus, College of Medicine at Amassoma, and the law campus in Yenagoa.

The population of the study comprised 4,045 registered undergraduate students for the school year 2008/2009 as well as fifteen library staff in the Internet Section.

## V. Research Methodology and Technique

The descriptive research design was used for this study. According to Osuala (1995), descriptive survey design is useful in identifying present condition and problem through orderly collection, analysis and interpretation of data.

The random sampling technique was employed in this study. It was used to select 404 student Internet users in the libraries. According to Emele and Emele (1995), the sample size should be between the range of 5- 30% of the population. The entire 15 library systems staff were included in the study. Table 1 below shows the campuses, registered Internet users (Population) and the sample taken from each campus.

**Table 1: Sample of students by campus**

S/N	Campuses	Population of registered Internet users	Sample size (%)	Sample size
1	Main University Library, Amassoma	3,580	10	358
2	College of Medicine Library	231	10	23
3	The Law Library	234	10	23
	Total	4,045		404

Source: From the University Library Register 2008/2009 semester

The questionnaire was the major instrument used for data collection, complemented by oral interviews for the fifteen library staff in charge of the Internet Section. It was divided into sections. Section A contains the bio data and section B contains 21 questions relating to the research questions. The questionnaire was validated through the advice of ICT experts and librarians, who are of the rank of senior lecturers and above in Delta State University, Abraka and Niger Delta University, Amassoma, Nigeria.

To ensure that the total of 404 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and retrieved, the researchers were personally involved in the distribution and retrieval.

**Table 2: Sex of respondents**

Gender	F	%
Female	182	45%
Male	222	55%
Total:	404	100%

Table 2 shows that there are 182 (45%) female respondents and 222 (55%) male respondents.

## VI. Findings and Discussions

*Research Question 1: Are there Internet services in the libraries?*

**Table 3: Internet services in the Library**

S/No	Item	SA		A		SD		D	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Internet services in my library are functional and accessible.	404	100						
2	Internet connectivity is regular and consistent.	340	84	64	16				



3	Internet services in my library are satisfactory.	258	64	126	31	20	5		
4	There is no Internet connectivity in my library.	-	-	-	-	-	-		

Table 3 is a summary of the respondents, regarding to the Internet services in the library. The table showed that 404 (100%) accepted that the Internet services in the library is functional and accessible, 340 (84%) strongly agreed that the services is regular and consistent while 64 (16%) merely agreed that it is regular and consistent. On the satisfactory aspect of the Internet services in the library 258 (64%) respondents accepted it. This confirms the findings of Salako and Tihamiyu (2007), Fatoki (2004) and Obuh (2007) that students in higher institution has access to the Internet services.

*Research Question 2: Are there Internet usage regulations in the libraries?*

**Table 4: Internet usage regulation in the libraries**

S/No	Items	SA		A		SD		D	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	There are Internet regulations in the library.			43	11	110	27		
2	There are no Internet regulations in the library.	220	54			31	8		
3	Internet regulations in the library are not effective.	392	92					12	3
4	Internet regulations are on time usage only.	390	97					14	3
5	Internet usage regulations allow access to any websites.	345	85	28	7	31	8		
6	Internet usage regulations in the library dose not allow other activities except educational research.			10	2	382	95	12	3

Table 4 shows that 220 (54%) respondents accepted that there are no Internet regulations in the library. 390 (97%) respondents agreed that the Internet regulations in the library are on time usage only. This means staff are only concerned about the time students spent on the Internet, not their activities.

Besides, 345 (85%) respondents agreed that Internet usage regulations in the library allow access to any websites. In other words, there are no restrictions on what websites to use. Therefore, students could use it for mischievous purposes as referred to by Hanson (2003). If the Internet usage is not regulated in libraries in Nigeria, it would be no difference from that of the cyber café.

*Research Question 3: Are the Internet services in these libraries used for educational purposes*

**Table 5: Internet services in the Libraries**

S/No	Items	SA		A		SD		D	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Internet services in the library are geared towards educational purposes.	26	6					378	94
2	Internet services in the library allow other website usage and activities.	14	3	390	97				
3	Internet services in the library do not confirm my usage to educational website.					345	85	59	15

Table 5 revealed that 378 (94%) respondents disagreed that the Internet services in the library are geared towards educational purpose while 390 (97%) respondents accepted that the Internet services in the library allow for other website usage and activities. The Internet regulation is meant to check the use of the Internet usage. Since it is not there, it allows for any online activities in the library.

*Research Question 4: To what extent are the Internet usage regulation implemented in the libraries.*

**Table 6: Implementation of Internet usage regulations in the library**

S/No	Items	SA		A		SD		D	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Access to the Internet in the library is password-controlled.					404	100		
2	I am asked to fill the Internet regulation form before using it.					404	100		
3	The Internet usage is supervised by the ICT staff in the library.			264	65	140	35		
4	Pornography, hacking, Piracy and spam mails are prohibited in the library.			342	85	62	15		
5	CD ROMs, diskettes and flash drives usage are not allowed.	389	96			15	4		
6	My library identity card is taken before using the Internet.	156	37			254	63		
7	Other websites are blocked except for educational websites.					404	100		
8	Staff are mainly concerned about the Internet time usage in the library.			321	79			83	20

Table 6 shows that 404 (100%) respondents strongly disagreed that access to the Internet in the library is password-controlled and that they are not asked to fill the Internet regulation form before using it.

342 (85%) respondents agreed that pornography, hacking, piracy and spam mails are prohibited in the library. 889 (96) respondents agreed that CD-ROMs, diskettes and flash drives usage are not allowed. 404 (100%) indicated that they are not blocked from using other website. 321 (79%) agreed that staff are mainly concerned about time usage of the Internet.

## **VII. Further Findings from the Interviews with Library Staff**

The interview with the fifteen library staff in the Internet Section showed that there is no written policy or regulations guiding the use of the Internet in the library. And there are no monitoring software installed in the systems to prevent or block users from visiting inappropriate websites. In the absence of these, staff manually monitor users' usage by walking round to see that they use it for educational purpose, not for personal activities. The maximum time allowed per user is one hour. CD-ROMs, flash drive and diskette usage are not allowed because personal information can be stored in them and disseminated through the computer and the Internet. Students are not assigned passwords to use computers and the Internet. Library staff only write down the name, matriculation number and department of students before allowing them for access.

## VIII. Conclusion

There are many opportunities available on the Internet. As various kinds of crime is now perpetrated using this medium, it has aroused concerns for information professionals, security experts, and the government. Various conferences have been held on cyber crime and cyber security in Nigeria with a view to forming a proper Internet use policy. Nigeria Communication Commission has set up a monitoring team to ensure that all the Internet services in all higher education institution libraries are registered.

Before the age of the Internet, students and researchers who need information rely on the library, where they find it frustrating in retrieving the desired information. The Internet came as a solution to these difficulties and as a means of improving their information seeking behavior. However, it has been found that some students are engaged in cyber criminal acts rather than using the Internet for academic purposes. If not properly regulated, the Internet services provided by the library will not be immune from facilitating cyber-related crimes.

Therefore, there should be an Internet regulation policy in the library. These regulations will guide students on the use of the Internet. Students should be given passwords to gain access to the Internet and their usage will be monitored. Website not related to educational purpose should be blocked. Library staff should not be concerned about how long students have been using the Internet but whether they use it for education purposes or not.

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