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**Awareness of Electronic Resources Databases and  
Assessment of Information Technology (IT) Facilities Used  
by Distance Learners at the Kenneth Dike Library,  
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*This study examined awareness of electronic resources cum assessment of Information Technology (IT) facilities being used to access electronic resources databases available in Kenneth Dike Library (KDL), University of Ibadan, by the distance learners (DLs). Survey method was adopted for this study. The population of the study consisted of ninety one (91) distance learning students drawn from the four (4) faculties that offer distance learning programme in the institution. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Data collected were analysed, using frequency and simple percentage. The study found that majority of DLs lack awareness and knowledge of available e-resources databases in the library. However, their assessment of the library IT facilities was on the average. The paper concluded that, for the distance learners to have adequate knowledge in respect of the available electronic resources, particularly in their subject areas, creating awareness at the main library, faculty and departmental levels is necessary. Methods on how to enhance and sustain sensitisation and provision of supportive IT facilities in order to effectively utilise the available electronic databases through KDL of the University of Ibadan formed part of the recommendations.*

**Keywords:** Awareness, IT Facilities, Distance Learners, Electronic Resources

## Introduction

Distance Learning Education (DLE) had been an important and crucial component of the University of Ibadan system since early 1970s. It was formally known as Centre for External Studies. The programme started with Department of Adult Education in the Faculty of Education. Over the years, the programme has been extended to other Faculties such as Arts, The Social Sciences and Agriculture. The aim of DLE is to avail the working class running busy schedules the opportunity to acquire tertiary education which is aimed at enhancing their work status. This acquisition of higher degree certificate gives the distance learners wider opportunities for self-development, promotion on the job, better job offer and lifelong learning. DLE requires an environment in which learners actively participate in constructing their own knowledge (Chifwepa, 2008). The role of library as rendering support services to Teaching Learning and Research (TLR) cannot be overemphasized in ensuring outstanding services that fit the digital era. Distance learners are remote students in different locations who are on external programmes. They are students who don't attend lectures regularly like the students on full-time mode of learning.

University of Ibadan Library was established to support all students' academic endeavours, hence, the acquisition of resources such as core materials, reference materials in print, electronic and other formats that would be useful for TLR purposes. Due to the mode of study of distance learners and observation, the possibility of accessing and using the print collections is slim and the use of more electronic resources is presumed to support their programmes. However, it was noted that the resources of the library are underutilised by the distance learners; reason for this development is a bone of contention for the Library and University Management. It is against this background that this study tends to find out the level of awareness and facilities assessment for the use of

electronic resources databases availability through Kenneth Dike Library (KDL), University of Ibadan. This study will help all the stakeholders involved in DLE programme to be well informed in respect of improving information services delivery to the University of Ibadan distance learners.

### **Distance Learning Education**

Education is the bedrock of development and lifelong learning. With the population trend globally coupled with restructuring especially in the university system, it has become difficult to give fulltime admission to all, hence the need for academic development through Distance Education (DE). DE is in practice both in the developed and developing countries' university systems (Fulcher & Lock, 1999; Rowland & Rubbert, 2001; Kavulya, 2004; Chifwepa, 2008; Aina, 2008). The stakeholders in DLE involve learners and their lecturers who communicate virtually most times and do meet on few occasions for face to face interactive sessions towards their examination unlike fulltime students who are regularly available on campuses.

### **Distance Learning Education and Awareness of E-resources Databases in the University System**

In any university setting, Distance Learning Education (DLE) should be accorded with TLR facilities in order to achieve their goal which is excellent output (Aina, 2008; Mabawonku, 2004). Learning facilities in any university should be made accessible to the distance learners (part time). Library as the knowledge hub and gateway to individual, organisation, national and international intellectuals cannot be undermined in the DLE. Aina, (2008) argued that international standard guidelines should be the bases for library support for DE in Africa. E-resources should be made accessible to the distance learners for use because of the nature of their programmes.

E-resources can be referred to as intellectual contents that can be accessed through the aids of ICTs among which are computers and the Internet. Aside this, many of the present generation of distance learners are youth and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) inclined hence the need for the library to provide them with resources tailored toward their information needs. Behm, (2002) asserts that library requires constant change to meet the information needs and provide library services to the DLs. It is therefore the sole responsibility of the library to create awareness about the availability of these e-resources and training on how to effectively utilise it. Mabawonku, (2004) revealed that 85.9% of distance learners had never used CDROM in the course of their academic pursuits. This could be lack of awareness of the available e-resources in the three universities studied. It may be inferred that lack of orientation as well as information literacy training could be responsible for DLs non-use of the available e-resources. Support by libraries to DLs in Africa is still at low ebb (Mabawonku, 2004; Aina, 2008; Akande, 2011; Dulle, 2015).

### **Distance Learning Education and Library Facilities in the University System**

DLE in the university system should assume a new dimension which will reflect a world class learning environment that initiates excellent and innovative thinking to enhance development and sustain such. To achieve this, DLs are expected to acquire knowledge from both the interactive session with the lecturers as well as independent study. The library, in this case, is seen as an interface between the students and where information is resident in order to achieve enhanced knowledge. The library environment and the facilities put in place will either encourage or mar the use of the library for academic excellence. It was found by Mabawonku, (2004) that DLs do not have borrowing privileges. As a result, when it comes to discharging of materials, the tendency is high

for DLs to rely more on e-resources for use in the course of their programmes. It is therefore paramount to stress the need for the library to engage in aggressive sensitization exercise and market the resources and services available for DLs in their universities. Adams and Cassner, (2001) advocated for different marketing techniques that would showcase library support services for DLs. Marketing strategies such as the use of social media platform, electronic bulletin, e-mail, e-bill board could be adopted for efficient and effective communication to DLs. The students look forward to proactive services from the library. Fulcher & Lock, (1999), asserts that library role in support for DE will continue to change and this will assist the library to tailor their services toward the students information needs. Nwezeh, (2010) found from the four Nigerian universities studied that DL programme was not adequately supported by their libraries. She opined that adequate planning and budgeting should be prioritised. The library space, computers and accessories, Internet and its infrastructures, electricity supply and backup, literacy skills training among others are needed to fully utilise e-resources in libraries by DLs. Studies have shown that computer literacy level of DLs is low. Akande, (2011), in a study revealed that 49% of the respondents were computer literate, while others were illiterate and undecided. Mabawonku, (2004) corroborates the position of this finding. However availability of the Internet facilities with a robust network in the library should not be undermined because it enhances training, practice and mastering of its use. Furthermore, the bandwidth should be dedicated and strong in respect of availability of signals. The finding of Habiba & Chowdhury, (2012) shows that the bandwidth connected to the library is poor for access to electronic resources. Several studies have been conducted but awareness and IT facility support for DLs of the University of Ibadan has not been studied. It is against this background that this study sets to investigate DLs level of awareness and assessment of IT facilities for the use of e-resources at the



University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The findings of this study will be useful to the library management, distance programmes managers and other stakeholders in DLE programme. The result would assist in providing holistic solutions that would improve and enhance the DLs learning experience especially with regards to library support for DLE programmes.

### **Statement of Problem**

Distance Learners mode of study is different from fulltime students who make appearance on campus from time to time to use the library resources (both print and electronics) and facilities in the course of their programmes. It was observed that timely sensitisation and regular assessment of library IT facilities that support access to electronic databases in Kenneth Dike Library for use by the distance learners have not been given serious and adequate attention it deserves. This has placed the DLs at the disadvantaged level and to this end, there is need to see how the problems associated with this development can be alleviated so that equal opportunity and privileges can be accorded DLs of the University of Ibadan.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Ascertain the level of awareness/knowledge of available e-resources databases by distance learners
2. Investigate the methods to become aware of e-resources databases
3. Assess the status of IT facilities available for accessing e-resources databases.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of awareness/ knowledge of available e-resources databases by distance learners?
2. What are the methods through which the distance learners become aware of e-resources databases?
3. How adequate are the library IT facilities for accessing these electronic databases?

## Methodology

Survey method was adopted for this study. The population of this study comprised of DLs of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, drawn from four (4) faculties that offer DLE. The study used random sampling techniques; a total number of one hundred and fifty (150) distance learning students drawn from the Faculties of Agriculture, Arts, Education and The Social Sciences of University of Ibadan were used as sampling frame for the study. The study used questionnaire and administered it to gather data from the distance learners in their lecture rooms. Ninety-one (61%) respondents were returned and valid for analysis. Results were analysed and presented using tables and simple percentages.

## Findings and Discussion of the Study

Thirty eight (41.76%) respondents were males while 53(58.24%) were females. All the students were distance learners and undergraduate students of the University of Ibadan. The finding on gender supports the findings of (Akande, 2011; Nwezeh, 2010) on gender.

Table 1: Respondents according to Faculties

Faculty	No	%
Agriculture	22	24.18
Arts	11	12.09
Education	39	42.86
The Social Sciences	18	19.78
No response	1	1.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 showed that the respondents cut across all the Faculties that run distance education programme in the university. Majority of the respondents were from the Faculties of Education and Agriculture.

**Table 2: Distribution according to Age**

Age	No.	%
16 – 30	46	50.55
31 – 45	34	37.37
46 – 60	10	10.99
No response	1	1.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The Table 2 shows that respondents in the first group age were 46 (50.55%). This could imply that majority of the respondents were youth. It could be interpreted that, they would continue to explore information and communication related technologies for their academic and personal purposes. The finding corroborates the position of Akande (2011) on age distribution.

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of awareness/knowledge of available e-resources databases by distance learners?

**Table 3: Awareness of Electronic Resources Databases (ERDs)**

E-Resources Databases	Yes	%	No	%
JSTOR	4	4.39	87	95.61
TEEAL	2	2.20	89	97.8
AGORA	2	2.20	89	97.8
HINARI	1	1.10	90	98.9
PROQUEST	1	1.10	90	98.9
ScienceDirect	1	1.10	90	98.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12.09</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>87.91</b>

Table 3 shows that 11 (12.09%) of the respondents were aware of electronic resources availability in the library and 80 (87.91%) were not aware of any e-resources. This shows that few distance learners are cognisance of e-resources availability while others needed to be sensitised. Olowolafe & Musa, 2011; Namugera, 2014 affirm that lack of awareness of e-resources

was a barrier to its use. It was also observed that librarians are not involved in distance learning orientation programme. This could be part of setbacks in gaining adequate knowledge about these e-resources databases by the students. As shown in Table 3, majority of the respondents 80 (87.91%) lack adequate knowledge about different databases in which their programme subject areas are embedded in. This finding is similar to (Dadzie, 2005) whose study found that 7% of the respondents used scholarly databases subscribed to by the library. In the same vein, Fabunmi & Adeyemi (2015) study corroborates the position of this finding.

**Research Question 2:** What are the methods through which the distance learners become aware of e-resources databases?

**Table 4: Method of Awareness about E-resources**

<b>Method of Notification</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Colleagues	6	6.59
KDL News	1	1.10
Library Notice Board	1	1.10
Library Website	3	3.30
No Method	80	87.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4 revealed that majority of the respondents 80 (87.91%) did not receive information or notification through any of the channels of communication listed in Table 4. Very few respondents received notification through both traditional and electronic channels of information communication. The finding shows that the use of electronic channels of information communication to create awareness about library services is gaining ground gradually. Johnson, Osmond, & Holz, 2009; Mansuri, (n.d.) opined that use of email alerts, really simple syndication (RSS) feed among others is another way of creating awareness about library services. In same vein, Namugera, (2014) submitted that diverse approaches should be applied to enhance users' awareness and increase the use of library services.

### Research Question 3: How adequate are the library IT facilities for accessing these electronic databases?

**Table 5: Assessment of IT Support Facilities in the Library**

Facility Assessment	Excellent		Good		Fair		Bad		No Response	
	No.	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Internet Speed	2	2.20	18	19.78	60	65.93	3	3.30	8	8.79
Electricity Supply	15	16.48	29	31.87	26	28.57	2	2.20	19	20.88
Computer Adequacy	11	12.08	22	24.18	50	54.95	8	8.79	0	0
Library Space	12	13.19	28	30.77	45	49.45	6	6.59	0	0

Table 5 shows responses on the assessment of the IT support facilities in the library. It revealed that majority of the respondents 60 (65.93%) indicated that library's internet facility was fairly okay while 20 (21.98%) had a contrary notion. It is glaring that Internet connection in the library is poor. This finding affirms Dim, (2010) who opined that lack of infrastructural facilities hampers scholarly communication and information in distance learning. Namugera, (2014) corroborates the position of this finding. It could be deduced that dedicated bandwidth to the library (main, faculty and departmental) is low. The implication of this is that the students would continue to experience slow Internet connection. Out of the ninety one respondents, 29 (31.87%) rated electricity supply good while 2 (2.20%) rated it poor. This could imply that there was improved power supply through sources of electricity supply such as generator, inverter, solar and uninterruptable power supply devices among others. This finding contradicted (Uwaifo, 2012; Oyedapo & Ojo, 2013) whose findings revealed that majority of the students found erratic power supply as a major obstacle to the use of electronic resources. The finding of this study shows that computers were not adequately available in the library. This finding corroborate (Dadzie, 2005; Dhanavandan, Mohammed, & Nagarajan, 2012; Uwaifo, 2012; Namugera, 2014) which submitted that students had limited access to computer terminals. Library space assessment shows that 45 (49.45%)

respondents were not satisfied with the library space. Although, the study revealed that some of the respondents 28 (30.77%) found the library space facility good while 6 (6.95%) respondents ranked the facility poor.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study have shown that the level of awareness on the available e-resources databases by the distance learners is very low. There is need for creating more awareness about University of Ibadan Library e-resources databases. *Furthermore, methods of creating awareness about e-resources databases by the library were a great hindrance.* However, the supporting IT facilities were found to be averagely okay.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are hereby proffered:

- Library orientation programme with librarians involved should be observed for the distance learners as it is being done for regular students.
- Emerging technologies (social media platforms) should be used as sensitisation tools to compliment traditional methods for creating necessary awareness.
- Provision of dedicated bandwidth with strong signals in order to ease hiccups being experienced when surfing the Internet.
- IT and physical facilities in the main, faculty and departmental libraries should be improved upon to encourage the use of electronic resources databases, particularly for those who do not have personal laptops.

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