# Awareness and Utilization of Online Databases by University Lecturers in Federal University of Technology, Minna

Adamu Baba Musa
Dr. Jibril Attahiru Alhassan
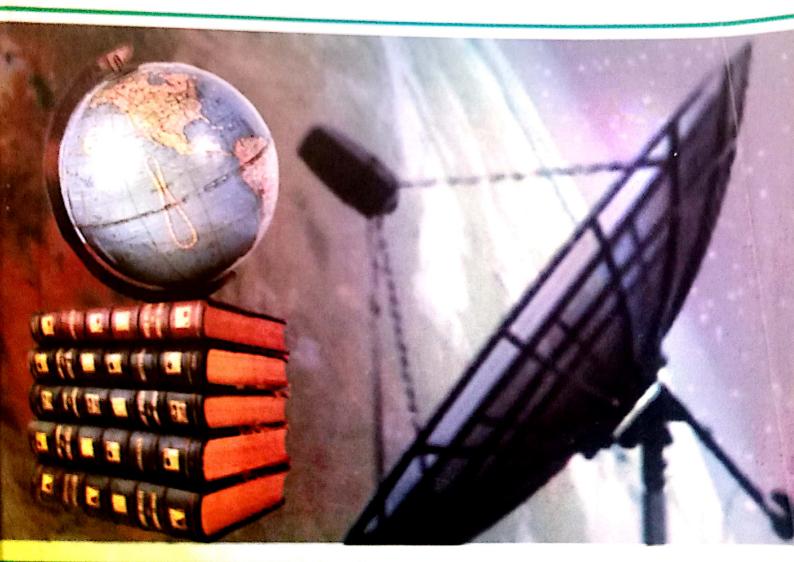and
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## Abstract

The study investigates the awareness and utilization of online databases by university lecturers in Federal University of Technology, Minna. Specifically, five purposes guided the study. It adopted a descriptive survey design and had a sample size of two hundred and sixty (260) respondents made up of all the teaching staff from the eight (8) schools in the university. as at July, 2016. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents from all the schools in the University. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency count and simple percentage and mean score. The findings of the study revealed that: that majority of the respondents are aware of and use Ebscohost and HINARI online databases, Science direct and Scopus online databases, TEEAL and OARE online databases. The findings also shown that majority have never used cell press, TEEAL and OARE online databases. The findings revealed that effective use of online databases for teaching and research makes teaching activities more efficient, enhancing their teaching skills, making teaching and research easier, improving teaching abilities, providing access to teaching materials, The findings also revealed that challenges in using online database include poor or erratic power supply, acute shortage in availability of personal computer, passwords restriction, and slow network. Finally, this study recommended among others that the university library management needs to speed up action on encouraging and supporting academics more importantly on the issue of use of online databases.

## Introduction

Universities all over the world are established to provide high level manpower to coordinate the various sectors of the nation. To produce sound personnel, universities embark on teaching, research and community service. Today, no nation can succeed without a university and other institutions of higher learning for developmental processes. These institutions exist because of students whose responsibility it is, to acquire... citizens. Acquisition of knowledge and skills in the ... process. The quality of knowledge and ... ability and quality of teachers

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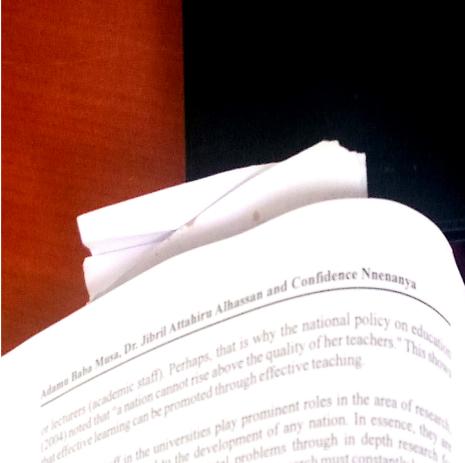
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## Introduction

Universities all over the world are established to provide high level manpower to coordinate the various sectors of the nation. To produce sound personnel, universities embark on teaching, research and community service. Today, no nation can succeed without a university and other institutions of higher learning for developmental processes. These institutions exist because of students whose responsibility it is, to learn and become responsible citizens. Acquisition of knowledge and skills in the university by students are through learning process. The quality of knowledge and skills received by students depends largely on the availability and quality of teachers

or lecturers (academic staff). Perhaps, that is why the national policy on education (2004) noted that "a nation cannot rise above the quality of her teachers." This shows that effective learning can be promoted through effective teaching.

The academic staff in the universities play prominent roles in the area of research which is very instrumental to the development of any nation. In essence, they are expected to provide solution to societal problems through in depth research for national development. According to Aina (2014), research must constantly be carried out as this will enlarge the frontiers of the discipline. He further posited that a research work is generally carried out in order to solve an existing problem or extending the frontiers of knowledge. However, it is glaring that effective teaching and research can only be effectively carried out when relevant information resources are available, accessible and used in the library. University libraries can promote academic excellence through the provision of well selected, preserved and organized information resources. Effective utilization of these resources by the academics acquaint them of the previous researches conducted and thus showing a vacuum to fill as well as providing the opportunity of reviewing relevant literature.

Information service provision has for a very long time been by traditional method, but today, the manual technique for information service is paving way for the new technology. Ukim (2014), opined that ICT has actually revolutionized the role of libraries towards adding value to library services, old methods for providing the needs of users are giving way to the new phenomenon. The hitherto predominant hard copy materials in academic libraries are gradually giving way to the electronic format of resources. These resources are organized into databases to permit searching by intending users which can be accessed using various mean including remote access online thereby resulting in what is known as online databases.

The importance of online databases is to provide a full-text and up-to-date information resources that will facilitate the teaching and research process in the academic community mostly for students, academic staff and researchers. Database resources give access to information that may be limited to the clientele because of their geographical area and financial constraints. They additionally give access to recent information as these databases are regularly updated. These databases are helpful and useful since clienteles can access and retrieve their immediate information from the internet in their workplaces or on occasion from the convenient of their various home each time of the day in order to solve some important information needs. Therefore, there is need to maximize the subscription and utilization of the available and relevant database resources to justify the financial investment involved in the support and maintenance of these resources in academic institution.

However, the purpose of these databases will be defeated if users are not satisfied with the resources they provide and also how the subscription is being done. It is observed that lecturers cannot access resources in the online databases remotely from their homes except during working hours thus; this has led to poor utilization of the resources subscribed to by the library. Hence it is in view of the foregoing that the researcher sorts to find out the level of awareness and utilization of online databases by academic staff of Federal University of Technology, Minna.

## Objectives of the study

The general purpose of this study is to evaluate the level of awareness and degree of utilization of online databases by academic staff of Federal University of Technology, Minna. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the awareness of lecturers on the availability of various online databases in Federal University of Technology, Minna.
2. Determine the level of utilization of each online database by academic staff of Federal University of Technology, Minna.
3. Determine the influence of the use of online database on teaching activities of academic staff in Federal University of Technology, Minna.
4. Find out the influence of the use of online databases on research output of academic staff of Federal University of Technology, Minna.
5. Determine the challenges in utilizing online databases by academic staff of Federal University of Technology, Minna.

## Literature Review

Several studies have been done on online databases in the areas of awareness, access, usage, orientations, relevance, training and preference, and evaluation amongst others. It is found in the literature that there is sometimes a gap between awareness and usage of digital resources. Either clienteles are aware of the online resources and utilize them, users are aware and do not utilize them, or users are unaware of them and along these lines do not utilize them. Studies by Nisha & Ali, (2013), Chirra & Madhusudhan, (2009), and Atakan et al, (2008) all found that clienteles were aware of and used the online databases available to them. For example, Chirra & Madhusudhan (2009) in a survey on use of online database by doctoral research scholars of Goa University, India, revealed that 100% of the respondents knew about the online database of the Consortium and accessed them. Studies by Okello-Obura (2010), Ercegovac (2009) and Manda (2006), in their study found that respondents were not aware of the vast majority of the online database provided for them in their respective institutions and in this way influenced their utilization. (first).

Wu & Chen (2012) studying how students see, use, and manage online database in the National University of Taiwan found that usage varied according to the subject

background of the student. They also found that humanities students perceived the online database less important compared to students of other disciplines. Similarly, Atakan et al (2008) asserted that disciplinary differences can influence the use of online databases. Sinh & Nhung (2012) argued that users' behaviour will influence the use of online databases, which might be traced to preferred types of materials, searching techniques, difficulties and expectations in using the online databases. Thus, in their survey on searching behaviour of users of six online databases subscribed to by the Central Vietnam National University in 2011 reported that 87.5% requested for full-text articles as compared with 12.5% who requested for abstracts. Coombs (2006) also reported a similar finding that full-text databases were preferred to other databases. Even among the full-text databases some are preferred to others due to the information architecture of the sites. Okello-Obura (2008) in evaluating the problems of LIS postgraduate students in Makerere University found that students used some of the online databases more than others. For example, 92% used Emerald followed by Blackwell synergy 76%. Nobody used the following databases, AGORA, Scopus, Royal Society of London, and Palgrave Macmillan Journals.

## Research Methodology

The survey research design was used in this study. The population of the study comprised all the teaching staff of the university which was 802 as at July, 2016. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents from all the schools in the University. Using Krejcie and Morgan Sample Table (1970) a sample size of two hundred and sixty (260) respondents were used from the eight (8) schools in the university. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Demographic data were analysed using frequency count and simple percentage while mean score was used to analyse data from the research questions. The decision criterion for the mean was set at 2.5 as an agreement for each of the items. Therefore, any value below 2.5 was considered a disagreement.

## Results And Discussion

A total of 260 copies of questionnaire were distributed to schools in Federal University of Technology, Minna. A total of 182 (70%) copies were properly filled and returned and used for the analysis.

### Table 1: Awareness of online Databases

| Online Database | Yes | | No | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Cell press | 47 | 26.0 | 135 | 74.0 |
| Ebscohost | 163 | 90.0 | 19 | 10.0 |
| HINARI | 159 | 87.0 | 23 | 13.0 |
| OARE | 41 | 23.0 | 141 | 78.0 |
| Science direct | 153 | 84.0 | 29 | 16.0 |
| Scopus | 158 | 87.0 | 24 | 13.0 |
| TEEAL | 92 | 51.0 | 90 | 50.0 |

From Table 1, the study reveals that majority of the respondents specified that they are aware of Ebscohost and HINARI online databases respectively, that they are aware of Science direct and Scopus online databases. The study further shown that respondents are aware of TEEAL and OARE online databases while few are aware of cell press online database. This implies that most of the respondents are aware of availability of these online databases in the university library.

## Table 2: Degree of use of online databases

| Online Database | Very often | | Often | | Occasionally | | Never | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Cell press | 2 | 1.0 | 4 | 2.0 | 5 | 3.0 | 171 | 94.0 |
| Ebscohost | 26 | 14.0 | 7 | 4.0 | 147 | 81.0 | 2 | 1.0 |
| HINARI | 5 | 3.0 | 6 | 3.0 | 127 | 70.0 | 44 | 24.0 |
| OARE | 4 | 2.0 | 4 | 2.0 | 60 | 33.0 | 107 | 59.0 |
| Science direct | 25 | 14.0 | 154 | 85.0 | 1 | 1.0 | 2 | 1.0 |
| Scopus | 60 | 33.0 | 114 | 63.0 | 4 | 2.0 | 4 | 2.0 |
| TEEAL | 6 | 3.0 | 3 | 2.0 | 2 | 1.0 | 171 | 94.0 |

Table2 reveals the degree of use of online databases by academic staff of Federal University of Technology, Minna. The study disclosed that 171 (94.0%) of the respondents never used cell press. Also from this research it was discovered that 147 (81.0%) occasionally used Ebscohost. In the same vein, 127 (70.0%) occasionally used HINARI online databases and 44 (24.0%) of the respondents never used HINARI online database, also 107 (59.0%) never used OARE online database, the table also shown that 154 (80.0%) often used science direct online database, and 114(63.0%) often used Scopus online database while 171 (94.0%) of the respondents never used TEEAL online database.

It can be inferred therefore, that majority of the respondents often use Science direct and Scopus Ebscohost and HINARI online databases respectively. The study also shown that majority have never used cell press, TEEAL and OARE online databases. This shown that great number of respondents often and occasionally utilised some of the above named online databases while the non-usage from some of the respondents could be because the interface of the online databases is not user friendly or there is acute shortage in availability of personal computers

### Table 3: Influence of the use of online database on teaching activities

| Statement | Remark | |
|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Decision |
| The use of online databases has made teaching activities more efficient | 4.0 | Agreed |

| Statement | Mean | Decision |
|---|---|---|
| The use of online databases enhances my teaching skills | 3.0 | Agreed |
| The use of online databases provides me with an effective method of teaching | 2.3 | Disagreed |
| The use of online databases makes teaching much easier | 3.4 | Agreed |
| The use of online databases improve my teaching abilities | 3.5 | Agreed |
| The use of online databases provides me quick access to teaching materials | 3.3 | Agreed |
| The use of online databases save much of my time in preparing lecture notes | 3.6 | Agreed |

Table 3 reveals that majority of the academic staff agreed respectively that the use of online databases has made teaching activities more efficient, enhances their teaching skills, makes teaching much easier, improve teaching abilities, provides lecturers quick access to teaching materials, and save much of their time in preparing lecture notes. The effect of providing them with an effective method of teaching was disagreed by the respondents; this may be because the online database is not used in selecting method of teaching.

**Table4: Influence of the use of online databases on research output**

| Statement | Mean | Decision |
|---|---|---|
| The online databases have made research more easier and productive | 3.5 | Agreed |
| The use of online databases provides me with easy access to research materials | 3.3 | Agreed |
| Online databases have exposed you to better ways of conducting research | 3.3 | Agreed |
| Online databases have helped you identify more international high impact journals to publish your articles | 3.4 | Agreed |
| The use of online databases has improved the quality of my research work | 3.4 | Agreed |
| The use of online databases broaden my horizon on other forms of research | 3.3 | Agreed |
| The use of online databases reduces the tendency for plagiarism and blind copying | 2.4 | Disagreed |

| Statement | Mean | Decision |
|---|---|---|
| The use of online databases provides me with up to date and current information for my research work | 3.3 | Agreed |
| The use of online databases improve my research abilities and lead me to better research work | 3.3 | Agreed |

Table 4 reveals that majority of the academic staff strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the online databases have made research easier and productive for them, provides them with easy access to research materials, exposed them to better ways of conducting research, helped them identify more international high impact journals to publish your articles, enhanced the quality of their research work, broaden their horizon on other forms of research and improved their research abilities and lead them to better research work.

It was disagreed that the effect of the use of online databases on research output is to reduce the tendency for plagiarism and blind copy this may probably be because the online database does not check plagiarized or copy level of a work neither does it restrict or reduce author from copying.

## Table 5: Challenges in using the online databases.

| Statement | Remark | |
|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Decision |
| Poor or erratic power supply poses an obstacle to use of online databases | 3.8 | Agreed |
| Acute shortage in availability of personal computers has negative effect on the use of online databases | 3.2 | Agreed |
| Inadequate ICT skills by me is a major challenge in accessing online databases | 2.0 | Disagreed |
| Password restricts me from using online databases | 3.0 | Agreed |
| Slow network is a major challenge in using the online databases | 2.6 | Agreed |
| The interface of the online databases are not user friendly | 1.2 | Disagreed |
| The library does not provide orientation on the use of the databases | 1.2 | Disagreed |

staff strongly agreed that Poor or erratic

network is a major challenge in using the online databases.

It was disagreed that inadequate ICT skills by them is not a major challenge in using the online database, interface of online databases is not user friendly, library does not provide orientation on how to use databases. This could imply that they have ICT skills required in accessing and retrieving online database, the interface of the online database is also sociable and library does provide the necessary oriented they might need in utilizing the online databases.

## Conclusion

This study was undertaken in order to see how well the online databases of Federal University of Technology, Minna Library are being used by lecturers and to have an idea of how to improve awareness and usage, and also to feel the impact on teaching activities, research output and community service as well as deal with the challenges. According to the results, there was a high degree of awareness of these databases by the staff; there was also a positive effect of online databases on teaching activities and research output. However, the influence was not totally impressive. This was as result of some challenges. The ones that featured prominently included erratic power supply, slow Internet connectivity, passwords restriction and lack of personal computers. Effort should therefore, be made by various stakeholders to ensure adequate awareness and effective use of online databases by lecturers in Federal University of Technology, Minna Library.

## Recommendations

The study suggests a number of recommendations to increase usage and deal with challenges as follows:

1. The university library management needs to encourage and support academics more importantly on the issue of use of online databases.

2. More measures should be taken to map out some strategies on effective service to the community through the use of online databases by academic staff.

3. A wireless connection with various hot spots should be made available to facilitate the use of online databases anywhere on campus. Every academic staff should also own a personal computer to enjoy unlimited access.

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