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Emerging Trends in University of Buea Library and the Realization of Global Education by Medical Students

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Abstract

This study made use of medical students in the Faculty of Health Sciences to investigate the emerging trends in University of Buea Library (UBL) towards the realization of global education. The population consisted of 1049 students in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) University of Buea, South West Region (SWR) of Cameroon. Proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques were respectively adopted in the selection and use of a sample size of 500 medical students which represented 51% of the population. Percentage was used as a statistical tool in analyzing the data. The findings of the study revealed that UBL is very much at the fore front of major emerging trends in librarianship which foster global education through research. However, it was recommended that University Librarian, Vice Chancellor and other stake holders should put hand on deck to ensure adequate utility of available information resources in the library.

Introduction

A library can be defined as an institution that acquires, organizes and makes available information resources to a defined community of users in order to satisfy their information needs which could be reading, research or recreation. Unlike in the past where traditional libraries offered strictly physical access to principally 'hard' books, today most modern libraries are organized institutions which provide digital access to 'soft' information resources like e-books and audio books. A library may be a physical space e.g. a building which is usually a magnificent structure (traditional library), a virtual space (electronic library) or a physical space which incorporates virtual activities (hybrid library). However, libraries are classified based on the immediate role they play and the institution to which they are attached. In this regard, there exist six different types of libraries namely: academic library, school library, public library, national library, special library and private library. Among these six types of libraries only academic library is useful to this research paper.

An academic library is a library found within tertiary education and is therefore attached to a university or other institutions of higher learning such as polytechnics

and colleges of education. Edoke [1] argued that academic libraries exist in institutions of higher education such as universities, colleges of technology and polytechnics. Therefore, University of Buea Library (UBL) is an academic library and as such its principal function is to acquire information resources in all forms and formats and in all areas of knowledge, organize and disseminate them to students and lecturers as a prerequisite for teaching, learning, research and outreach. It is a learning center which provides materials that are required for the teaching and learning of all the courses that are offered in the university as well as potential courses that are planned to be offered later by current and future curricula respectively. According to Ntui and Edam-Agbor [2], the principal functions of an academic library include the following:

1. To provide information materials required for the academic programmes of its parent university
2. To provide research information resources in consonance with the needs of faculties and research students
3. To provide information resources for recreation and

for personal self-development of users

4. To provide study accommodation in a useful variety of locations

5. To provide protection and security for these materials

6. To co-operate with other libraries at appropriate levels for improved information services

7. To provide specialized information services to appropriate segments of the wider community

The iconographic power of a university library expresses a purpose not just to collect, but also to organize, preserve, and make knowledge accessible. Today on several university campuses, the advents of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Internet have brought about automation and digitization in countless academic libraries. Automation and digitization have brought a wind of change in the way things are done in academic libraries. In this dispensation, the adequate type of library to identify with is nothing other than electronic or virtual library. In most higher education institutions, electronic library occupies a central position in the educational life of those concerned. In its placement and prominence, the electronic academic library plays an integral role in supporting higher education's core missions of research, teaching, learning and outreach.

As higher education keeps evolving at a global scene from one decade to another and from one century to another, practices and services in university libraries correspondingly keep evolving, in order to forge pathways to serve faculties and students more effectively. Academic and research libraries have been early adopters of digital technologies and have provided leadership and training to help remake the academic enterprise. And yet, for all their success in accommodating and even powering recent transformations in higher education, some university libraries in Cameroon, for instance University of Buea Library still needs to ask and answer a series of fundamental questions among which include the following:

1. To what extent, and in what ways, is University of Buea Library changing and is more likely to continue changing?

2. What new roles have librarians in University of Buea Library assumed (or what new roles will they come to assume) in the face of major transformation such as digital change?

3. What aspects of University of Buea Library need

urgent transformation?

4. What type of new technology has been or is currently being or should be acquired and implemented in University of Buea Library?

In trying to answer these questions University of Buea Library should be able to realize that the years ahead constitute an age of transformation for academic and research libraries. Therefore, if the expected transformation has not yet happened, or is not happening, what is certain is that some days to come it will happen in each and every academic library.

Statement of Problem

Global education can hardly be achieved without the acquisition, adoption and implementation of major emerging transformations in academic or research libraries. Academic libraries all over the world are nonresistant in adopting new Information and Communication Technology and Internet neither are they hesitant in adopting automation and digitization. These are major transformations that have been assessed and proven to be the driving force behind modern research in an attempt to ensure global education [3]. For approximately two centuries now (twentieth and twenty-first centuries), academic libraries have been confronting the need to re-conceive and reconstruct the means by which they support lecturers, faculties and students in teaching, learning, research and education. The business of libraries can now be understood as one component of a rapidly evolving, almost wholly transformed environment in which information is proliferating at heretofore unimagined rates and in which the ability of academic libraries to deliver authenticated and reliable information is continuously challenged by new technologies [4].

According to a report commissioned by the Research Information Network and the Consortium of Research Libraries (RINCR) titled "Use of Academic Libraries and their Services" if a library is electronic, its users who are researchers are on the whole satisfied with the services it provides. The survey conducted by this Research Information Network and Consortium of Research Libraries showed that nearly three-quarters of researchers believed that their institution's electronic library provides the information resources and services they need "very effectively". However, the pace of technological change and the increasing availability of digital information impose pressures on libraries, and highlight the tension between what could be done in an ideal world and what can be done in practical terms. As expectations have changed, librarians face growing demands from researchers for better access

to research information resources and tools. It is for this reason that the researcher decided to use students in the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Buea, Cameroon, in finding out various emerging trends (if there are any) in University of Buea Library and the new face of research towards the realization of global education.

Literature Review

Greenstein [5] recognized digitization as a major transformation in academic libraries capable of fueling research to ensure global education. This could mean that academic libraries which are lagging behind in this direction may not be at the fore front of global education. Greenstein [5] opined that digital libraries extend the breadth and scale of scholarly and cultural evidence and supports innovative research and lifelong learning. To do this, it mediates between diverse and distributed information resources on the one hand and a changing range of user communities on the other hand.

A rather sub emerging transformation from digitization, is what Greenstein [5] called “a digital library service environment” that is, a networked online information space in which users can discover, locate, acquire and access increasingly used information. Although access paths may vary depending on a particular resource in question, Greenstein [5] is of the opinion that “digital library service environment makes no distinctions among information formats. Books, journals, paper-based archives, video, film, and sound recordings are as visible in the digital library service environment as are online catalogs, finding aids, abstracting and indexing services, e-journal and e-book services, digitized collections and other Internet/electronic resources”.

Etim, Ebong and Gilean [6] regarded a digital library as a collection of texts, images, etc., encoded so as to be stored, retrieved, and read by computer; or a collection of documents in organized electronic form, available on the Internet or on CD ROM disks. However, there is a traditional, conventional or physical library which these authors posit that it provides a basis for the digital library. Meanwhile [7,8] in revealed that in the last couple of years, students and lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions have increasingly demanded and preferred access to electronic sources delivery and networked information from their respective libraries. These authors identified Internet access as one of the greatest emerging technological advancements being experienced in this 21st century that can ensure efficient research and thus global education. Furthermore, these authors also identified the new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as an overall emerging

tool that fosters research in academic libraries. ICT has gone a long way to influence the mode of information gathering, storage, retrieval and dissemination in this dispensation. Internet access is used for electronic mailing services, electronic on-line chats, group activities among others [9]. This has resulted in increased access to timely, accurate, relevant and current information in most ICT compliant libraries all over the world. Consequently, Etim, Ebong and Gilean [6] opined as follows:

“Global educational development and academic library research are two inseparable and indivisible concepts, both being fundamentally and synchronically related to and co-existent with each other. One cannot be separated from the other. None of them is an end in itself; rather both of them are a means to an ultimate end. One dies as soon as the other perishes. One survives as long as the other exists. This twined-nature concept emerged from the birth of human civilization and rose to posterity through a process of evolution in accord with varied needs, changes, and circumstances of various stages of human life. Library has no meaning if it cannot impart education. A well-equipped digital library is a sine qua non for the intellectual, moral, and spiritual advancement and elevation of the people of a given society. pp. 21-22”

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to use students in the faculty of Health Sciences, University of Buea, Cameroon, in finding out various emerging trends in University of Buea Library, towards the realization of global education. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Determine whether University of Buea Library provides emerging trends in librarianship.
- ii. Identify major emerging trends in librarianship that University of Buea Library provides to students in the Faculty of Health Sciences
- iii. Determine the extent to which students in the Faculty of Health Sciences make use of identified emerging library trends in University of Buea Library when conducting research.

Research Question

The main research question of the study was asked thus: what are the various emerging trends in University of Buea Library in accordance with the realization of global education? The following specific research questions were asked:

- i. Does University of Buea Library provide emerging

trends in librarianship?

ii. What major emerging trends in librarianship does University of Buea Library provide to students in the Faculty of Health Sciences?

iii. To what extent do medical students in the Faculty of Health Sciences make use of identified emerging library trends in University of Buea Library when they are conducting research.

Methodology

This study was conducted in University of Buea. The population consisted of 1049 students in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques were adopted in the selection and use of a sample size of 525 medical students which represented 50% of the population. Consequently, 525 questionnaires titled Questionnaire for Emerging Transformations in Library towards the Realization of Global Education (QETLRGE) were distributed to the respondents. The administration of questionnaires was done in various laboratories, libraries, lectures halls and amphitheatres of the Faculty of Health Sciences. However, 500 copies were returned, representing 95% return rate. For easy understanding of research data computation, non-parametric statistics mainly percentage was used in analyzing respondents' points of view.

Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

Demographic Information of Respondents in FHS

Out of 500 respondents that were used for the exercise, the following information in (Table 1) was decoded from their demography. In all the departments in the Faculty of Health Sciences, 59%, 31.8% and 9.2% of respondents were between the age brackets of 18–28, 29–39 and 40+ years respectively. With respect to sex, 70% and 30% of respondents were male and female respectively.

Research Question 1

Does University of Buea Library provide emerging trends in librarianship?

Statistics in (Table 2) revealed that 38.4% of respondents accepted that University of Buea Library could be accessed remotely. This was opposed to 61.6% of respondents who rejected the fact that University of Buea Library could be accessed remotely. 47.8% of the students who took part in the research accepted that University of Buea Library provided ICT services, contrarily, 52.2% of the students declined from this fact and refuted that University of Buea Library provided ICT services to its users. An average

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents in FHS.

Department	Age			Sex		Total
	18–28 years	29–39 years	40+ years	Male	Female	
Department of Nursing	51	20	09	55	25	80
Department of Medical Laboratory Science	68	37	02	79	28	107
Department of Biomedical Sciences	19	10	00	16	13	29
Department of Medicine	157	92	35	200	84	284
Percentage (%)	59%	31.8%	9.2%	70%	30%	100%

Table 2: Distribution of responses on major emerging trends in University of Buea Library.

SN	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total agreements		Total disagreements	
						F	%	F	%
1.	UBL can be accessed remotely	74	118	153	155	192	38.4	308	61.6
2.	UBL provides ICT services to users	121	118	105	156	239	47.8	261	52.2
3.	UBL has Internet connectivity	111	149	89	151	260	52	240	48
4.	UBL is an automated library	411	89	00	00	500	100	00	00
5.	UBL can boost of having major ICT infrastructure	377	74	39	10	451	90.2	49	9.8
6.	UBL uses open sources software	92	144	119	145	236	47.2	264	52.8
	Total						62.6		37.4

response was obtained on the item which sought to know whether University of Buea Library has Internet connectivity or not. While 52% of respondents attested to the presence of Internet connectivity in University of Buea Library, 48% refused and sounded negative to this fact. Despite all the points recorded for disagreement on a variety of issues, the respondents converged on a single point when they unanimously (100%) agreed that University of Buea Library was undoubtedly an automated library. Consequently, 90.2% of the respondents declared that University of Buea Library could boost of having major ICT infrastructure. This was opposed to 9.8% of the students who refused that there were major ICT infrastructures in University of Buea Library. Concerning the use of OpenSource Software in University of Buea Library, only 47.2% of the students agreed to such usage as opposed to 52.8% of the students who rejected

such usage.

Cumulatively, 62.6% of students in the Faculty of Health Sciences were positive to questionnaire items on emerging trends in University of Buea Library. This was opposed to 37.4% of the said students who were negative to various questionnaire items on emerging trends in the said library. In conclusion therefore, the medical students in the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Buea, concurred that University of Buea Library is at the forefront of emerging transformations in today's librarianship.

Research Question 2

What major emerging trends in librarianship does University of Buea Library provide to students in the Faculty of Health Sciences?

Similarly, from statistics in (Table 2), a lot was revealed concerning the kind of major emerging trends in librarianship which University of Buea Library provided to students in the Faculty of Health Sciences. It was revealed that University of Buea Library:

- a. Is an automated library
- b. Has major ICT infrastructure
- c. Has Internet connectivity

However, it was revealed that University of Buea Library:

- a. Cannot be accessed remotely
- b. Does not provide ICT services to its users
- c. Does not use open source software

Research Question 3

To what extent do students in the Faculty of Health Sciences make use of identified emerging library trends in University of Buea Library when conducting research? Statistics in Table three revealed that all the research students (100%) made use of Internet in the library of University of Buea. Contrarily, 41% of the respondents acknowledged that in University of Buea Library, research students make use of Online Public Access Catalogue, as opposed to 59% of the said students who refuted. Concerning provisions of free online lectures on medical practices to research students in the Faculty of Health Sciences, 47.4% of the students affirmed its possibility, whereas 52.6% refuted such possibility. However, 99.4% of these students were of the opinion that in University of Buea Library, research students made use of MEDLINE, and this was contrary to 0.6% of the said students who were

of the opinion that MEDLINE as a facility never took care of their research need.

In the same way, 48% of these students accepted that University of Buea Library gave out electronic loans to research students in the Faculty of Health Sciences while 52% of them declined to this questionnaire item. Lastly, 93.6% of the respondents affirmed that University of Buea Library, ensured that users were drilled on electronic medical information literacy whereas 6.4% of the said respondents had a contrary opinion to this point of view. Summarily, Statistics in (Table 3) revealed that 71.57% of respondents generally showed a high extent of using identified emerging library trends in University of Buea Library when conducting research. This was in contrary to 28.43% of respondents who demonstrated no tendency toward the use of identified emerging library trends in the said library. In all, every respondent agreed to have used the Internet for research purposes. Other areas which the medical students highly deployed for research purposes were revealed to include MEDLINE and electronic medical information literacy. On the other hand, it was ascertained that in University of Buea Library, research students did not make use of OPAC, the said library did not give out electronic

Table 3: Distribution of responses on extent of utility of identified emerging library trends in University of Buea Library.

SN	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total agreements		Total disagreements	
						F	%	F	%
1.	In UBL research students make use of Internet	488	12	00	00	500	100	00	00
2.	In UBL research students make use of OPAC	121	84	95	200	205	41	295	59
3.	In UBL there are provisions for free online lectures on medical practices to research students	123	114	119	144	237	47.4	263	52.6
4.	In UBL research students make use of MEDLINE	333	164	1	2	497	99.4	3	0.6
5.	UBL gives out electronic loans to research students in the Faculty of Health Sciences	175	65	100	30	240	48	260	52
6.	UBL ensures that users are drilled on electronic medical information literacy	289	179	19	13	468	93.6	32	6.4
Total							71.57		28.43

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loans to research students and there were no provisions made by the library to offer free online lectures on medical practices to research students.

Discussion and Conclusion

Global education cannot be realized anywhere in the world without a central role played by academic or research libraries. It is logical to underscore that research can primarily be looked upon as the fuel for global education. Research, however, does not occur in the air. It is provoked by the presence of nuisance, engaged by an individual [10] and fostered or driven by a well-equipped and functional academic library. This depiction is an illustrated narrative of how an academic library can foster research toward the attainment of global education. Students in the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Buea, are young researchers who are keen on deploying modern services (emerging trends) offered by University of Buea Library so that the education they have on campus should conform to global standards.

Little wonder, Todaro [4] is of the opinion that an academic library ensures global education by supporting and facilitating faculty teaching activities while helping undergraduates to develop adequate research and information literacy skills. An academic library therefore provides active support that helps increase the productivity of faculty research and scholarship [4]. The library pays for resources faculty members need, from academic journals and books to electronic databases and e-resources. In this regard, it fosters research by serving as a repository of resources; in other words, it archives, preserves, and keeps track of resources.

To begin with, University of Buea Library is an automated library having major ICT infrastructure capable of offering Internet connectivity to users. This is why Covi and Cragin [7,8] revealed that in the last couple of years, students and lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions have increasingly demanded and preferred access to electronic sources delivery and networked information from their respective libraries. Therefore, any academic library which stands tall amidst provision of services of this nature, affirms the reason why Greenstein (2000) opined that digital libraries have the capability of extending the breadth and scale of scholarly and cultural evidence and supports innovative research and lifelong learning.

University of Buea Library offered Internet facility to its users, provide its users with the medical package called MEDLINE, and drilled its users on electronic medical information literacy. These are functions that are expected

of today's librarianship. Consequently, Etim, Ebon and Gilean [6] opined that "global educational development and academic library research are two inseparable ... concepts, both being fundamentally ... related ... one dies as soon as the other perishes and one survives as long as the other exists." Although it is ascertained that University of Buea Library provides emerging trends in librarianship, much still need to be desired of services this information platform offers. In this modern dispensation characterized by the advent of the new Information and Communication Technology, it is not too appealing to ascertain that there exists an academic library on the surface of the Earth which cannot be accessed remotely by its users, and which does not provide ICT services to its users. As if this is not enough, it is somewhat unpopular to come to term with the fact that there still exists an academic library which counts itself amongst those that do not use Open Source Software. Furthermore, it is awful to state that an academic library in the 21st century is limited by; failure to offer free online lectures to its users, inability to give out electronic loans to its users, and failure to make use of OPAC. On this basis, strong recommendations became inevitable to the proper functioning of University of Buea Library.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made.

1. The top management of University of Buea amongst whom include the Vice Chancellor, University Librarian, Registrar, Deputy Vice Chancellors and other key stake holders should relentlessly consider making frantic efforts toward the digitization of University of Buea Library. In this way, almost all the ICT related problems currently faced by this library will be naturally resolved. If University of Buea Library is digitized, it will automatically be more appealing to its users since it will:

- a. Be accessed remotely by its users
- b. Provide ICT services to its users
- c. Offer free online lectures to its users
- d. Be able to give out electronic loans to its users
- e. Highly make use of OPAC
- f. Highly make use of Open Source Software

2. The university authorities from top to bottom including His Excellency the Minister of State in charge of Higher Education, the Vice Chancellor of University of Buea, the University Librarian and all other related stake holders

should consider improving on the budget of University of Buea Library. If this is done, there are high stakes that many more ICT related infrastructural equipment will be acquired for the said library and this will in turn boost a high utilisation of this library while soliciting a high student turnout at the library.

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