Full Length Research Paper

Awareness and Utilization of Electronic Resources by Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty Members in Universities: A Case of Chuka University

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Abstract
The study sought to investigate the awareness and utilization of electronic resources by academic staff in the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty at Chuka University, Kenya. The purpose of the investigation was to inquire about the respondents' appreciation of the resources, level of utilization based on availability and access, benefits derived from usage as well as challenges encountered, as a result of usage. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The findings revealed that 82% of the respondents were aware of the electronic resources subscribed to by the University and that and 86% of the respondents utilized the resources two or three times a week. The study identified inconsistent internet connectivity, Lack of computer skills, slow network, power outage and irrelevant electronic information resources as hindrances to the utilization of these electronic resources. The study recommends enhancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) network or bandwidth, increasing the number of Information and Communication Technologies, provision of faculty specific user training and information literacy instruction, and increasing marketing strategies.

Keywords: awareness, utilization, Electronic Resources

Introduction
Sharma (2009) describes information resources as library's information materials that are in electronic form which include electronic books (e-books); electronic newspapers (e-newspapers); electronic journals (e-journals) as well as Internet resources. The emergence of information and communication Technology (ICT) has given birth to the development of digital libraries in universities around the world. This has increased access to information to scholars for teaching, learning and research. University libraries in Kenya have not been left out in this technological trend of providing quick and timely access to electronic resources to promote teaching, learning and research.

According to Aina (2012) Electronic resources promote resource sharing that could be supplemented with the printed resources. Electronic resources ensure timely access to knowledge and information. Ungern-Sternberg and Lindquist (1995) note that, electronic resources are easy to search, are most current and save shelf space. Ahmed, (2013); notes that electronic resources are very important and are widely used by researchers, students and faculty members to supplement printed resources. He continues to affirm that Faculty members use electronic resources to prepare teaching materials; faculty members and students use them to acquire information for research literature; students use them to get information for working on their assignments; and the resources are used as part of the learning process to increase knowledge. Bates' (2006) two-year study found that most scholars in the humanities field made little use of online databases. Scholars appreciated that the databases covered many topics, but complained about the difficulty of their search language and the lack of availability of desired resources. A study conducted by Ani and Edem (2012) to explore the extent of access and use of online databases by academic staff in the University of Calabar, Nigeria revealed that although vast majority of the academic staff were accessing and using relevant online databases in teaching / research, the frequency of usage was low, as most

respondents used these databases irregularly. Another study conducted by Ndinoshiho (2010) found that many e-resources were under-utilized in an African Universities. The study cited shortage of computers, unreliable internet connection and lack of skills as major barriers. A study by Manda (2005) found that there was limited access to personal computers (PCs) for student use in many of the institutions in Tanzania. This is supported by the study by Harle (2009) which states that in African universities, ICT facilities are relatively underdeveloped.

Today, significant investment has been made in electronic resources and computer-based technology to ensure access to electronic resources. However, their availability does not necessarily equate to their utilization. Chuka University Library usually invites both staff and students for training on accessing subscribed e-resources. However there is still low usage statistics of these subscribed e-resources. This research examines the awareness of electronic resources in Chuka University Library and their utilization by teaching staff in the faculty of Humanities and social sciences win an aim to analyze the following objectives; 1) To find out if academic staff in the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is aware of the electronic resources available. 2. To determine the extent of utilization of the electronic resources by academic staff in faculty of Humanities and social Sciences. 3. To identify factors that hinder the utilization of the electronic resources by academic staff in faculty of Humanities and social Sciences

The findings of this study are useful to Chuka University library and other academic libraries in Kenya in ensuring that there is high utilization of subscribed e-resources. The results of the study will point out to the library management on areas which need improvement in the management and utilization of e-resources. Furthermore, the findings will add onto the existing library and information science (LIS) literature on the utilization of subscribed e-resources. This study was guided by the technological acceptance model (TAM) developed by Davis in 1989. Davis (1989) indicates that TAM is a theoretical foundation that explains and predicts individual acceptance of information technology. In libraries context, the acceptance of technology is regarded as an enabling tool in accessing and utilization of e-resources. Users' acceptance, according to Davis (1993), is often the pivotal determinant of the success or failure of ICT adoption in an institution. User acceptance determines the degree of use and non-use of e-resources by Faculty members in Chuka University

The TAM comprises four variables as explained below:
(1) Perceived usefulness (PU): This is a degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance.
(2) Perceived ease of use (PEU): This is a degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort.
(3) Behavioral intention: This is the degree to which a person has formulated conscious plans to perform or not perform some specific future behavior.
(4) Actual system use: This is an act of a person using the system and obtaining the needed resources.

This theory therefore applies in this study because when library users find that e-resources are useful and easily accessed, they then decide to utilize them.
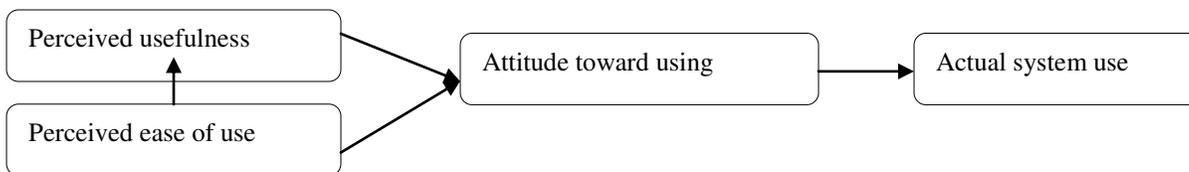
Source: Davis (1993)

Materials and methods
The study was conducted in Chuka University. The study targeted the teaching staff of the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty.
The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey was considered to be most appropriate because of its flexibility as it permits the use of a number of data collecting techniques including questionnaires, observation and interview. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to get respondents experiences, views and suggestions on the awareness and utilization of electronic information resources by academic staff. A structured questionnaire was distributed among the staff. The questionnaire had 5 sections: (1) demographic information; (2) awareness of electronic resources (3) knowledge and use of electronic resources, (4) challenges encountered when using electronic resources. The population consisted of 42 academic staff of Chuka University drawn from the Faculty of Humanities and social sciences. However 35 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 83%. The data analysis was done using SPSS and the data presented in form of explanatory notes and tables.

Results and discussion
Personal profile of the respondents
The first section of the questionnaire dealt with the personal information about the respondents. Of the 35 respondents, 57% were male and 43% were female. The data show that a large number of the respondents (52 %) were assistant lecturers, 45% Lecturers, 3% Associate Professors. Most of the respondents belonged to the age group of 31-40 years. Dulle and Minishi-Majanja (2010) pointed

out that gender differences have affected the rate of adoption of ICT and e-resources in developing (African) countries. Respondents' age also was taken into account as it can influence the access to and use of e-resources in the sense that most users of e-resources are young compared to older people. This is in line with Tenopir et al. (2008), who found that there was more use of e-resources by the younger academics than the older ones.
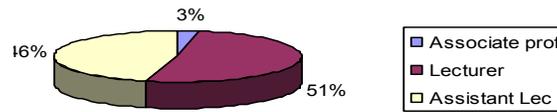

Fig. 1: Educational qualification

Table 1: Respondent's gender

Respondents	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
	Male	20	**57**
	Female	15	**43**
	Total	**35**	**100**

Awareness of e-resources
Respondents were asked if they were aware that the university had subscribed to electronic resources. 82% of the respondents reported that they were aware of the e-resources. These results are in line with the study conducted by Manda (2005), who revealed that even when information resources were distributed to individual academic staff, a number of potential users seemed not to be aware of or remember receiving such information. A study by Ibrahim (2004) and Majid and Tan (2002) affirms that awareness of e-resources is very important for high patronage.
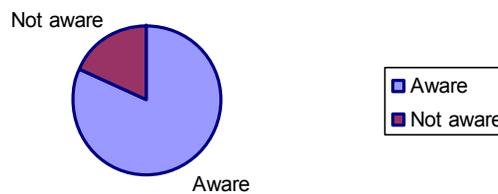

Fig 2: Aware of e-resources

Sources of awareness
The respondents were further requested to indicate how they came to learn of the e-resources in their library.
The most popular source of awareness was the library web page with 29% respondent followed by library staff at 23%. 17% of the respondents reported to have learnt from friends and library workshops. Library bulletins/guides/ posters formed the least source of awareness at 14%.
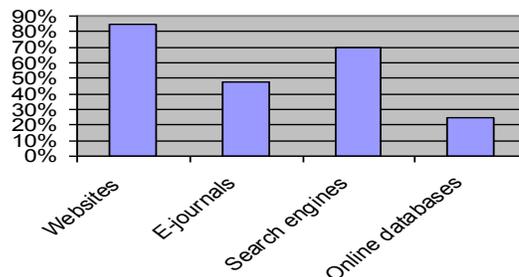

Fig 3. Types of e resources used

The figure above indicates that the majority (85%) of research scholars uses web sites, followed by e-journals (48%), search engines (70%), and online databases (25%). This study reveals that research scholars sought for the fastest and convenient way of looking for information. E-resources provide the advantage of anytime-anywhere accessibility, in a convenient way, saving busy research scholars time and effort spent physically visiting the library.

Frequency use of e-resources
The researcher sought to find out the frequency use of e-resources. The study revealed that 4% of the respondents made use of e-resources daily, 10% occasionally, and 86% two or three times a week. The frequency use of e-resources by research scholars depends on the nature of library's e-collections, organization, maintenance and services. It is also revealed at the time of the study that the availability of scholarly e-journals (intranet only) are free, which gives them the latest up-to-date literature of their relevant field is the main reason for daily use of e-resources by research scholars.
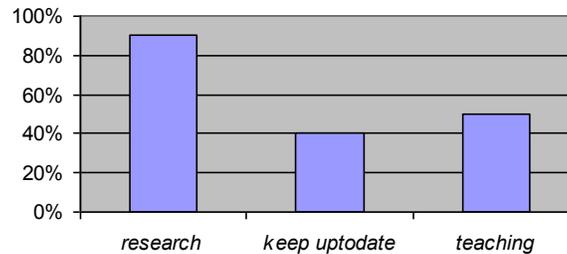
Fig 4 : Purpose of using e-resources

Faculty members were asked about the purpose of using the e-resources. Even though there were numerous purposes, research, keeping upto date and teaching reasons came out strongly. As indicated in figure 4 above, a majority (90%) reported to be using e-resources for their research, while 50% reported to use e-resources for teaching and 40% for keeping themselves up-to-date in their subject area of specialization.

The major constraints in using electronic resources

The respondents were asked to state the problems they faced while seeking information from the electronic resources. The majority (96%) and (95%) cited slow internet connection and lack of equipments respectively as the major challenges they faced when accessing e-resources. The findings are in line with the results of Ojokoh and Asaolu (2005), who found that adequacy of access to the internet for students and general usage was the problem encountered by the respondents in their use of electronic resources. 54% of the respondents cited lack of know-how in retrieving relevant information. While Information explosion was attributed 68% as another challenge in the use of e-resources. The study agrees with Dadzie's (2005) recommendation that bandwidths should be sought so as to provide faster access that will save much of the research scholars' time and be a source of motivation to use e-resources.
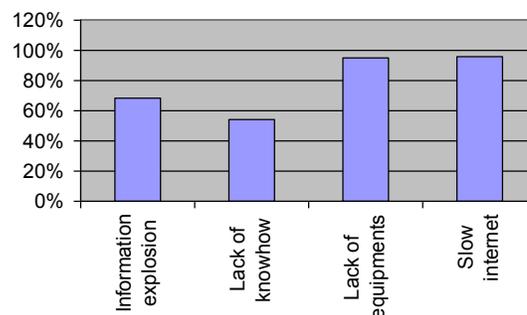

Fig 5: Challenges in using e-resources

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that the availability of electronic resources like Online databases, electronic journals, electronic books, internet and e-mail have a great impact on the information-seeking behavior of the humanists. Although they largely utilize print resources, they do pay good attention towards electronic resources. Challenges encountered include to lack of awareness, lack of proper training, lack of computer facilities and low internet bandwidth. The study recommends users' awareness through campaigns, orientations and workshops most importantly; there should be constant internet access for library users

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are put forward to increase awareness and maximize the utilization of e-resources among the research scholars:

* *The university should provide more computer workstations in offices with high speed connectivity.*
* *The University library in collaboration with departments should organize workshops and information literacy programmes to improve awareness of e-resources to all members.*
* *The library web page should provide online guides on how to access e-resources. This will help the users to navigate through the various databases.*

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