

Library Services to Distance Learners: The Experience of University of Lagos

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Introduction

Library resources and services are important component of any educational experience. The provision of quality library services to those who learn at a distance is undoubtedly one of the most exciting and challenging development that has occurred in modern librarianship (Watson, 1999). Distance education has impacted not only on the discipline of education, it has also affected services and profession that support distance learning and distance education.

Distance education no doubt has revolutionised and democratised the delivery and accessibility of education, it has also affected services and professions that support distance learning and distance education. Distance learning according to Fulcher and Lock (1999) is basically about access to educational opportunities for learners who do not wish or are not able to attend programmes offered on-site.

Distance education according to Watson (1992) is a method of study that is pursued by students who are physically separated from their tutors and institutions of instruction for the greater part of their study. United States Distance Learning Association (1998) defines distance education as the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance. These two definitions of distance education have shown that provision of quality and up to date services to those who learn at a distance is a challenge to the library. One of the main goals of distance education programme is to make sure that the knowledge and skills acquired positively affect the behaviour of the students. Similarly, the California Distance Learning Project (CDLP) (2011) defines distance learning as *an instructional delivery system that connects learners with educational resource, provides educational access to learners not enrolled in educational institutions and can augment the learning opportunities of current students. The implementation of DL is a process that uses available resources and will evolve to incorporate emerging technologies.*

The provision of quality library services to distance learning students will continue to experience global change as long as the need to provide effective and quality services that meet the needs and aspiration of citizens, decision-makers and distance learners is a long standing goal of the information profession. Suffice to say that the use of

information technology is one of the proactive ways through which libraries can deliver their services more effectively so as to enhance users' satisfaction.

In providing library services to distance learners, Watson (1999) opined that it is important that libraries should collaborate with agencies that are external to the library because it would be impossible to provide quality library and information services to distance learners without their assistance. She emphasized that library should expand the use of technology in providing library services to distance learners. These technologies have served to reduce the barriers to library and information services that distance learners experience due to distance. It saved time, improved cost-efficient and also improved service delivery (Osorio, 1997).

Slade and Kacus (1998) cited in Cassner and Adams (1999) predicted that four trends will shape the future of providing library services to distance learners. These trends are as follow:

- (i) First, they believe there will be an increased global reliance on technology and distance education. For example, libraries are expected to rely increasingly on the internet in linking distant learners with available resources and services.
- (ii) The second, trend will involve further collaboration and cooperation to increase quality, equity and access for remote learners. This collaboration will involve partnerships between librarians and other stakeholders, such as faculty, administrators, information systems experts and other institutions.
- (iii) The third trend is that off – campus and on campus boundaries will continue to blur.
- (iv) Finally, they believe that the distance learning paradigm will continue to change as the knowledge base expands due to growth in literature related to library support for the distance learners.

In summary, an inference can be made that the provision of quality library services to distance learning students most especially in a digital environment will continue to experience a global change as long as the need to provide effective and quality library services that meet the needs and aspiration of citizens, decision – makers and distance learners is a long standing goal of the information profession. Suffice to say that the use of Information Technology is one of the proactive ways through which libraries can deliver their services more effectively so as to enhance users' satisfaction. The advancement in telecommunications and rapid growth in distance programme have had great effects on the educational materials and distance education practices.

Librarians, distance educators and administrators must therefore, ensure that new strategies are adopted and quality library services are available to distance learners. These new strategies must be applied to every aspect of library and information services. One of these strategies is that library management should develop relationship with other service providers who are associated with the delivery of distance education programmes, courses and support services. These other service provider include information technology units – particularly when library services are delivered via this methods; telecommunications agencies whose services are used to deliver library services, materials production units whose services are used to develop library related distance education materials and member of academic staff who are involved in the development and delivery of distance education programmes and courses.

Statement of the Problem

Library services and resources are often not used to their full extent by distance learners and this could be attributed to the fact that, there is a physical separation between the distance learners and their instructors or institutions. Another barrier could be the absence of information technology as a medium of delivery library services to distance learners. In most develop countries; it is commonly observed that the expanded use and role of technology is the delivery of library and information services that are experienced by distance for these students. In order to take library services to distance learners many libraries in higher education institutions have placed most of their services on-line. In Nigeria it is observed that most academic libraries do not make provision for distance learners. To buttress this, investigation has shown that libraries are not meeting the needs of the distance learning students in terms of the opening hours, provision of relevant materials and technology availability in the delivery of quality library services to the distance learners. In the light of the foregoing, the study examines the delivery of library services to distance learning students in University of Lagos. This is with a view to determining how effectively and strategically libraries could enhance the delivery of library services to distance learning students.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided this study:

1. To find out library use pattern by the distance learners
2. To find out information sources mostly consulted by the distance learners
3. To examine the reasons for the use of the library by the distance learners
4. To determined the ICT skills possessed by distance learners for using the library.
5. To identify constraints to the use of the library by the distance learners.

University of Lagos

The University of Lagos was established by an act of the Federal Parliament in April 1962. The University is made up of two campuses; the main campus at Akoka, Yaba and the College of Medicine at Idi-Araba. The primary objective of the University at its inception was the preparation of professionals for the post-independence manpower needs of the Country.

University of Lagos has over the years grown by leaps and bounds both in the areas of physical development but also in the diversification of programmes available. The students' population has risen from the modest intake of 131 in 1962 to more than 39,000. The vision statement of the University is to be a top-class institution for the pursuit of excellence in knowledge through learning and research as well as in character and service to humanity while its mission is to provide conducive teaching, learning, research and compete effectively with their counterparts nationally and internationally in terms of intellectual competence and zeal to add value to the world. The University is made up of many arms but only two of the arms that are considered necessary to this paper shall be discussed i.e., The Distance Learning Institute and the University of Library.

Distance Learning Institute

The Distance Learning Institute was established as part of the primary objective of the University at its inception and as pronounced clearly in the Ashby Commission that "the provision of facilities for part-time studies in such fields as Business Studies, Accounting, Law and Education through Correspondence and Distance Learning techniques". It was in the actualization of this objective that the Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (COSU) was established in 1973. In 1983, a decade later COSU transformed into the Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSIT) with the granting of some measure of autonomy and enhanced scope of operations.

Due to global advances in Open Studies and Distance Learning mode of study, the University Senate in 1997 effected some re-structuring and streamlining towards achieving the pure Distance Learning mode of education delivery and to reflect the Distance Learning philosophy all its ramifications changed the name from COSIT to DLI (Distance Learning Institute). The Distance Learning Institute (DLI) constituted now has enhanced status as that of the University. The Distance Learning Institute statistics show that the students' population is approximately 18,000.

The Institute in some years back maintained some study centres in selected towns nationwide in order to reach out to her numerous students working or living outside Lagos. There were adequate and qualified part-time teaching staff and liaison officers to handle student's tutorials and counselling. These centres have been phased out in compliance with the directives of the Federal Ministry of Education abolishing such centres and constraining all institutions running programmes in study centres to their immediate environments.

University of Lagos Library

The University of Lagos Library was established in 1962. Presently, it has a collection of more than 500,000 accessioned volumes of books, 30,000 periodicals titles and numerous electronic databases such as AGORA, HINARI JSTOR, MEDLINE, OARE, ERIC, etc., and a wide range of e-books and e-journals covering a variety of subjects.

The University of Lagos Library provides students and faculty access to information on various disciplines. The distance learning students can also access these resources through the university website (<http://www.unilag.edu.ng>) or through the library website (<http://www.library.unilag>) and also browse the library catalog. The University library presents a picture of a modern library. The library has just acquired Millennium innovative software to help in making the library collections and services rendered fully automated.

The library collection can be accessed through the OPAC system with workstation located within the library. The library from 1995 has experienced unprecedented development from holding only traditional print materials to designing gateways to networked information (Zaid, 2012). The introduction of distance education in the University of Lagos was a turning point in the era of library and information service by the University of Lagos library. The library is complementing the traditional library setting with online services. The library also provides 24 hours library services to both the on-campus and distance learning students during examination period.

Literature Review

Aina (2008) identified that inadequate library and information service support is the most fundamental problem affecting the quality of distance education programme in Africa. A distance learner without quality library service support would have little or no experience in conducting research. Oladokun (2000) posited that the introduction of information literacy skill (ILS) to the distance learners will make them confident and competent in using any library information facilities, this is because these category of students need the understanding of ILS more than the on-campus students who have the opportunity to walk in to request and obtain readily available assistance from the librarians.

Supporting Watson (1999), Oladokun (2000) was of the opinion that distance will be narrowed if modern technology is fully exploited in providing library services to distance learners. The distance in this case is the barrier hindering distance learners from getting quality library services. Oladokun (2009) studied library and information needs and barrier to the use of information sources by continuing education students at the University of Botswana and discovered that the University of Botswana library does not adequately cater for the library and information needs of the students. In a study conducted by Msuya and Maro (2002) on the provision of library and information services to distance learners in the open university of Tanzania (OUT), and to know the extent these services are meeting the needs of the learners. The study found that the library and information provision for the students is not well developed to support the academic programmes. The study also revealed that due to lack of proper library services, some of the learners withdraw from the programme.

Mabawonku (2004) in a study of library use in distance learning surveyed three universities and found out that adequate arrangement were not made by the libraries for the students to use. The study recommended that Universities should make adequate provision for the students to have access to library and information resources. Information literacy skill (ILS) should be introduced to the distance learners.(Oladokun, 2000) and (Mobawonku, 2004).

Aina (2008) proposed that library association of each country should formulate guidelines which will serve as a framework for the provision of library and information services to distance education. The Association of College and Research Libraries (2008), a division of the American Library association has revised its official document ACRL Standards for distance learning library services to include the provision of library support to distance learners. A summary of the guidelines include core elements like philosophy of providing services, management, financial responsibility for services, facilities, personnel, library resources and services. Distant learners and faculty according to Cassner and Adams (1999) should have access to the following library services and resources:

a) Reference assistance- librarians should provide answers to reference questions and the questions may be to know about the library services and resources available in the library.

b) Bibliographic Instruction and information services-Distance learners should be provided with instruction on how to access the library electronic resources and services. The students should also be provided with basic library skills as well as information on how to search the library's online catalog for books and citations for journal articles independently.

c) Access to library materials- Distance learners and faculty should be entitled to borrowing facilities through the institution offering classes. The users should be provided with the option of receiving materials through document delivery service or inter library loan in a shortest time.

d) Means of contacting librarians and staff- Users should be provided with the means of contacting librarians and library staff which may include, phones, emails or fax machine. In this age of information communication technology (ICT), social media sites or network are now been use as a means of contacting librarians and library staff.

e) Documented policies and procedures- This means that students should have access to current documented library policies and procedures, this include; print handout and/or web pages/homepages that mainly address library services for distance learners and faculty.

Watson (2003) identified basic library and information services distance learners needs, these needs are:

(i) Access to information resources such as texts, supplementary reading and reference services

(ii) Learning how to find the information needed from the information available

(iii) Develop ways of applying the information sourced and to make sound, information-based decisions.

The Role of Technology to in Library Services to Distance Learners

The emergence of technology has offered institutions running distance education programmes different options in the delivery of library and information services. The use of technology has reduced the barriers experienced by distance learning students in accessing library and information resources.

In order to provide library services to distance learning students, many libraries in developed countries are already using ICT as their main method of delivering library services and information resources through online chat rooms, e-mails services, teleconferencing, free online databases and reference services. Students are also able to search electronic databases and access the online catalogues (OPAC), examine abstract and to some extent read full text documents.

Another use of technology in the provision of library and information services to distance learners is in the delivery of library services such as information literacy, bibliographic instruction and references skills as on-line courses (Watson 1999). The telephone, computer technology and internet are technologies that have been used in the evaluation of distance learning, from correspondence courses to interactive video and virtual learning environment.

Institutions in some developing countries do not rely on ICTs to provide access to library services to their distance learners due to the high cost of the technology and also a large number of distance learners would not be able to participate fully or benefit from it (Watson, 2003). Bill and Melinda Gates foundation provide grants to help bridge the technology divide such as helping to provide computers in libraries in developing countries. Information and communication technologies affect learning and also enable new methods of delivery. It allows and encourage new forms of interaction and connections between one learner and others learners, between learners and tutors, between a learning community and its learning resources. This term is regarded

as “networked learning” which is use to described this range of educational approaches (Brophy, 2001) as cited in Rio (2003).

Rio (2003) opined that technology has a close relationship with the teaching of distance education because it intervenes in the separation between teacher and learners through the use of print, radio, telephone, tapes and computers. Digital and networked technologies according to Al-Oraini and Kaur (2007) has been a very important development in making it possible for instructors and students to access a wealth of information quickly, easily and interactively in both face –to –face and remote education settings. These technologies have proved time saving, cost effectiveness and delivery.

Methodology

At the time conducting this research, the Distance Learning Institute was running two programmes, Accounting and Business Administration programmes. Public Administration and Economics programmes currently in place were recently floated. The study therefore was conducted among students in Accounting and Business Administration programmes. Questionnaire was the main instrument used in gathering data for this research. The questionnaire consisted of four-page closed ended questions. The questionnaire was administered to the students during their residential programme because that was the only period that brings the students together on campus. A total of two hundred and fifty (250) copies of a questionnaire were administered to the students in the library and lectures halls. Twenty-one copies of the questionnaire were eliminated because they were not properly completed. Two hundred and twenty-nine (229) copies of the questionnaire were duly completed and this formed 91.6 percent response rate. Descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage were used to analyse the data collected for the purpose of this study.

Findings

Section A: Demographic information

A total of 229 students completed the questionnaire; consisting of 138 (60.3%) male and 91 (39.7%) females. This implies that there are more males respondents than females respondents. It was revealed that more than half of the respondents, 156 (68.1%) were between the ages of 20 and 30 years. 57 (24%) of the respondents claimed to be between the ages of 31 and 40 years, 14(6.1%) also claimed to be between 41 and 50 years while 2 (0.9%) were 51 years and above. 127 (55.4%) were from the department of Accounting while 102 (44.6%) were from the department of Business Administration.

Section B: Library Use pattern

Table 1: Frequency of library use by the respondents

Variable	Often	Always	Rarely	Never
Please indicate the frequency of your use of the library	78 (34.1%)	56 (24.5%)	82 (35.8%)	13 (5.7%)

Table 1 above presents the frequency use library services by the respondents. The table indicates that 78 (34.1%) of the respondents used the library often. 56 (24.5%)

used the library for one thing or another always. The highest percentage of the respondents, that is, 82 (35.8%) rarely used the library while 13(5.7%) of the respondents never used the library.

Table 2: Most likely time of using the library by the respondents

Variables	Revision period	Examination period	During semester break	When writing my assignment	When writing my final project
When do you mostly like to use the library?	74 (32.3%)	106 (46.3%)	13 (5.7%)	23 (10.05)	13 (5.7%)

Table 2 above revealed that the respondents 106 (46.3%) made use of the library mostly during examination period. Also 74 (32.3 %) respondents use the library during their revision period. 13 (5.7%) make use of the library during semester break. 23 (10.5%) when writing assignment and 13 (5.7%) when writing final project were not popular among the respondents. Therefore, it could be deduced that most of the respondents rarely make use of library services

Table 3: Respondents reasons for using the library

S/N	Variables	Yes	No
1	To write assignment	125(54.6%)	104(45.4%)
2	To read lecture notes	134(58.5%)	95(41.5%)
3	To consult textbooks	66(72.5%)	63(27.5%)
4	To consult journals (hard copies)	82(35.8%)	147(64.2%)
5	To use the e-resources	72(31.4%)	157(68.6%)
6	To read for examination	180(78.6%)	49(21.4%)
7	To consult reference materials	136(59.4%)	93(40.6%)
8	To photocopy material	49(21.4%)	180(78.6%)
9	To make use of the internet	72(31.4%)	157(68.6%)

From the result presented in table 3 above, it is inferred that the respondents make use of library for the following reasons: 180 (78.6%) respondents use the library when they want to prepare for examination.136 (59%) respondents visit the library to consult reference materials while 134 (58.5%) respondents use the library to read lectures notes and 125 (54.6%) respondents make use of the library to write assignment. The least reasons for the usage of library as indicated by the respondents

were to consult journals, textbooks, to use the e-resources, internet and to photocopy information materials.

Table 4: Mostly consulted Information resources by the respondents

S/N	Materials mostly consulted	Always	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
1	Reference Materials	52 (22.7%)	106 (46.3%)	35(15.3%)	36(15.7%)
2	Textbooks	102(44.5%)	83(36.2%)	25(10.9%)	19(8.3%)
3	Newspaper	26(11.4%)	65(28.4%)	48(21.0%)	90(39.3%)
4	Journals	22(9.6%)	63(27.5%)	65(28.4%)	79(34.5%)
5	Electronic databases	27(11.8%)	53(23.1%)	48(21.0%)	101(44.1%)
6	Thesis/Dissertations	4(1.7%)	38(16.6%)	64(27.9%)	123(53.7%)
7	Internet	47(20.5)	60(26.2%)	26(11.4%)	96(41.9%)

The table 4 above revealed that 102 (44.5%) respondents make use of textbook and is the most highly consulted information resources by the respondents. This is follow by 52 (22.7%) respondents who made use of reference materials while 47 (20.5%) respondents used internet sources. 27 (11.8%) respondents make use of electronic databases, 26 (11.4%) respondents used Newspaper, 22 (9.6%) respondents make use of journals while 4 (1.7%) respondents uses theses/dissertations. are the least information resources used by the respondents.

Table 5: Rating of information needs by the respondents

S/N	Variables	Low Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent	Very Great Extent
1	Information on class assignment	32(14.0%)	75(32.8%)	75(32.8%)	47(20.5%)
2	Information concerning my course	27(11.8%)	69(30.1%)	83(36.2%)	50(21.8%)
3	Information from the internet	69(30.1%)	63(27.5%)	58(25.3%)	39(17.0%)
4	Information on reading lists from my lecturers	60(26.3%)	67(29.3%)	63(27.5%)	39(17.0%)
5	Information on current affairs	74(32.3%)	94(41.1%)	47(20.5%)	14(6.1%)

6	Information on personal development	45(19.7%)	73(31.9%)	61(26.6%)	50(21.8%)
7	Information on e-resources from the library website	113(49.3%)	66(28.8%)	33(14.4%)	17(7.4%)
8	Information on scholarly publication in journals	128(55.9%)	60(26.2%)	29(12.7%)	12(5.2%)
9	Information to help prepare research proposal	72(31.4%)	68(29.7%)	62(29.7%)	27(11.8%)
10	Information to help in conducting research	74(32.3%)	65(28.4%)	57(24.9%)	55(14.4%)

Table 5 revealed that the highest number of respondents, that is, 128 (55.9%) seek for information on scholarly publication in journals to a low extent, follow by 113 (49.3%) of the respondents that seek for information on e-resources from the library website also to a low extent. The table also shows that 55 (14.4%) of the respondents seek for information to help in conducting research to a very great extent. This implies that distance learning students don't use the library and its information services like the on-campus students.

Table 6: Computer literacy skills level of the respondents

Variables	Low	Average	High
I have a low computer literacy level	24(10.5%)		
I have average skill in computer use		135 (59.0%)	
I am highly skilled in the use of computer			70 (30.6%)

Table 6 above reveal that 135 (59%) of the respondents possessed average skill in computer literacy skill, 70 (30.6%) are highly skilled while 24 (10.4%) have low computer literacy skill. From the result, it could be deduced that most of the respondents have average skill in the use of computer.

Table 7: Respondents' Level of satisfaction with the library services and resources

Variable	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Very Satisfied	Indifferent	Total
What is the level satisfaction of library services and sources	48 (21.0%)	114 (49.8%)	54 (23.6%)	13 (5.7%)	229 (100%)

Table 7 above shows that 48 (21.0%) and 114 (49.8%) of the respondents were satisfied with the library services and resources while 54 (23.6%) respondents were not satisfied. However, 13 (5.7%) were indifferent to the statement. This implies that most of the respondents were satisfied with the services and resources obtained from the library.

Having observed the level of satisfaction of library services and resources by the respondents, the researcher then wanted to know from the respondents if there was any major constraint they encounters in accessing information resources in the library.

Table 8: Constraints to the use of library information resources

S/N	Variables	Agreed	Disagreed	Indifferent
1	The library opening hours are not helpful	40 (17.5%)	145 (63.3%)	44 (19.2%)
2	Library staff are not cooperative	38 (16.6%)	147 (64.2%)	44 (19.2%)
3	Incessant power supply	43 (18.8%)	150 (65.5%)	36 (15.7%)
4	Obsolete information resources	82 (35.8%)	97 (42.4%)	36 (15.7%)
5	Materials found in the catalogue are not usually found on the shelves	73 (31.9%)	80 (34.9%)	76 (33.2%)
6	Inadequate information on materials needed	84 (36.7%)	93 (40.6%)	52 (22.7%)
7	Erratic internet connectivity	75 (32.8%)	70 (30.6%)	84 (36.7%)
8	Lack of access to some e-resources	98 (42.8%)	59 (25.8%)	72 (31.4%)
9	I don't know how to locate information materials that I want in the library	76 (33.2%)	117 (51.1%)	36 (15.7%)
10	There is no provision for DL students in the library (such as registration, loaning of information materials)	121 (52.8%)	77 (33.6%)	31 (13.5%)

Table 8 above shows that 145 (63.3%) of the respondents disagreed that library opening hours are not helpful and 40 (17.5%) agreed that it is not helpful while 44 (19.2%) were indifferent. 147 (64.2%) did not agree that library staff were not cooperative while 38 (16.6%) agreed with the statement and 44 (19.2%) were indifferent. Also from the table, 150 (65.5%) did not identify incessant power supply as

a constraint, 43 (18.8%) identify it as a constraint while 36 (15.7%) were indifferent. 97 (42.4%) did not indicate obsolete information material as a constraint, 82 (35.8%) indicated obsolete material as a constraint in accessing information material and 36 (15.7%) were indifferent. 80 (34.9%) disagreed that materials in the catalogue are not usually found on the shelves, 73 (31.9%) agreed with the statement and 76 (33.2%) were indifferent. This implies that majority of the respondents don't make use of the library catalogue or do not know how to use the catalogue to access information materials and that is why there is a high response rate of respondents' being indifferent with the statement. 93 (40.6%) of the respondents disagreed that inadequate information on material needed is a constraint and 84 (36.7%) agreed while 52 (22.7%) were indifferent. 75 (32.8%) of the respondents' identified erratic internet connectivity as one of the constraints while 70 (30.6%) disagreed. 98 (42.8%) indicated lack of access to some e-resources as a constraint and 59 (25.8%) disagreed while 72 (31.4%) were indifferent. However, 117 (51.1%) of the respondents could locate information materials while 76 (33.2%) could not. Finally, 121 (52.8%) of the respondents agreed that there is no provision for distance learning students in the library and 77 (33.6%) disagreed with the statement.

Discussion

One of the primary observations of this study was frequency of gender distribution of the respondents. Out of the total respondents, 138 (60.3%) were male while 91 (39.7%) were female. This revealed that there are more male students than female students at the Distance Learning program at the University. Another significant observation was on the age distribution where the largest percentages of the respondents were between 20 and 30 years. This implies that the Distance Learning programme is now made up of young students unlike in those days when such programme was made up of older students and also because of the difficulties of securing admission into full time programme.

The study also revealed that not all the students make use of the library, this support Mabawonku (2004) position that a student could graduate without using libraries because there is no library use instruction giving to the students.. Also study revealed that textbooks and reference materials are the materials mostly conducted by the respondents. The study further revealed reasons for the use of library and its services by the respondents; it was revealed that the majority of the students use the library and its services to read for examination.

The study found that that majority of the respondents have average skill in computer use. This is a pertinent fact that the use of technology has overtaken most academic activities in most countries in the world with the introduction of communication technologies like mobile phones, internet facilities, social network media, etc. The respondents use for this study are using one form of technology or another and this has helped the students to develop their computer skill.

Interesting outcome of this study are the constraints the respondents encounter when accessing information resources in the library. No provision for distance learning students in the library (such as registration, loaning facilities), lack of access to some e-resources, inadequate information on materials needed, obsolete information and not been able to locate information materials needed and erratic internet connectivity constituted significant constraints to the respondents out of the ten constraints listed in the study. However, the overall picture that emerged from this study is the cry of the respondents for increase provision of library services for distance learning students in the library. The respondents want to be able to register in the library and also to be

able to loan information materials. The students want the same services given to the on-campus students.

The Way Forward

Libraries and academic staff where distance learning programmes are offered should work closely. This is because library is suppose to provide library services that are comparable to the services provided to on-campus learning to the distance learners. Academic libraries role in the developing of strategies that will enhance library and information services is to provide the best possible support to distance learning students. One of these strategies is the ease at which distance learners can access library materials needed to accomplish their research. The support services that makes the students to achieve this success includes reference services, bibliographic instruction and document delivery services and the successful implementation of these services depends entirely on library staff attitude to project traditional ethos of services to their users to also include the distance learning students (Hufford, 2007).

The distance education programme is different from the on-campus programme. Therefore, distance learning students should be equipped with information literacy skills (ILS) more than the on-campus students who could walk into the library to request and obtain the needed information easily from the library. These information literacy skill (ILS) skills will assist the students to know how to seek information concerning their courses, assignments and examinations and researches. It will make them confident and competent to use library resources and facilities when, where and how they choose.

University libraries should consider the application of information technology in the delivery of library services to distance learners, such as, the use of OPACs, internet services for searching online information, E-mail facility for easy communication and as a means of sending and receiving information relating to their information needs, online systems and services, networked databases. Most libraries in developed countries have librarians who provide library services for distance learning students. These librarians among the titles they are called Distance Education Librarians, Off-Campus Librarians, Continuing Services Librarian or Support Service Librarian depending on the nomenclature each of the University libraries wants (Watson, 1999).

The present researcher is not aware if such nomenclatures exist in Nigerian libraries. Libraries in Nigeria libraries should have librarian whose duties is to provide library services to distance learners. These librarians should be given necessary training and requisite skills in order to meet the information needs of their users. It is important for librarians, administrators and facilitators to include other modalities in their delivery of information services. This is important because access to technology is not universal and not all technological systems are equal. Consequently, librarians should collaborate with distance education administrators in designing library services to distance learners because it would be impossible to provide library and information services without their input.

Conclusion

This research was conducted in order to gain some insights into the library and information services the University of Lagos is providing to the Distance Learning students. The University of Lagos is already well-position to serve distance learners and the librarians are ready to partner with Distance learning administrators to provide the distance learners with quality library services they expect from the library.

In view of this, the library has recently acquired a library software "Innovative Millennium" that will enable the library to pursue its goal of meeting the information needs of its users including the distance learners. In order to take library services to distance learners, the library has placed most of its services and resources on the library web page. There is a 24-hour library service provision to both on-campus and distance learning students during their examination period. The library also made provision for users to make contact with the library anytime they want information regarding the library services or resources. These are strategies the library has developed to meet the information needs of distance learning students.

The study revealed that there is still a big gap existing in services rendered to distance learners when compared to on-campus. The students want equal library services as that given to their contemporaries in full-time programmes, services like registering in the library and loaning services. University management should consider these issues and devise a method that would give equal library services to distance learners. In addition, university management, faculty staff and librarians should be involved in the planning and designing of library services to distance learners. Nigeria Library Association (NLA) should formulate a set of standards for distance learning library services; it is in line with Aina (2008) position that the library associations of each country should formulate a set of guidelines for distance education learning library and information services.

Finally, the result of this study might be of importance to the university management, distance education administrators as well as to librarians providing library services to Faculty, staff, and students in distance learning programmes and also to explore possible ways the library can provide efficient library services to distance learners.

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