

# Mobile Information Services Delivery by Librarians in University Libraries in Nigeria: Some Observations

Chukwuemeka Ogonnaya Azubuiké<sup>1,\*</sup>, Uwaebuka Wisdom Madu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Library and Information Science, Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun State, Nigeria

\*Corresponding author: [azubuiké\\_chukwuemeka@yahoo.com](mailto:azubuiké_chukwuemeka@yahoo.com)

**Abstract** This work focused on Mobile Information Services delivery by Librarians in University Libraries in Nigeria. The Nigerian populace have overwhelmingly embraced the use of mobile devices as an integral part of their everyday lives. As at 2015, Nigeria ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the world list of mobile phone users and 1<sup>st</sup> in Africa. On the world list of internet users, Nigeria is also 7<sup>th</sup> with 86,436,611 internet users. Also, in a 2015 profiling of countries that love smartphones by e-marketers, Nigeria was ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the world. The need for this study was prompted after observing that most categories of people in the University communities rely much on Mobile technologies such as smart phones, cell phones, iPods, MP3 players and tablets as some of the mobile devices used in academic libraries, to locate, retrieve, evaluate and use information and the need for librarians in the University Libraries in Nigeria to assist these Information users with the use of Mobile technologies to professionally meet their Information needs. This therefore raises a question of what could be done to assist these information users in these University communities. The Study reveals that electricity failure; too many mobile devices to learn; lack of knowledge; slow speed of the internet; inadequate funds, staff and training opportunities in using mobile devices for marketing library and information products and services have been identified as some of the constraints to mobile information services delivery. Because of the mentioned problems, necessary measures should be taken as recommended by the researcher in the concluding part of this research work.

**Keywords:** *mobile information services, mobile devices, academic librarians, Nigeria*

**Cite This Article:** Chukwuemeka Ogonnaya Azubuiké, and Uwaebuka Wisdom Madu, "Mobile Information Services Delivery by Librarians in University Libraries in Nigeria: Some Observations." *Automatic Control and Information Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2017): 5-7. doi: 10.12691/acis-3-1-2.

## 1. Introduction

The Nigerian populace have overwhelmingly embraced the use of mobile devices as an integral part of their everyday lives. As at 2015, Nigeria ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the world list of mobile phone users and 1<sup>st</sup> in Africa on the world list of internet users. Nigeria is also 7<sup>th</sup> with 86,436,611 internet users. Also, in a 2015 profiling of countries that love smartphones by e-marketers, Nigeria was ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the world. The country was said to have 23.1 million smartphones in 2015, a figure projected to increase to 34 million by 2018 [1]. A significant percentage of the users of these devices are found in institutions of higher learning. Given the widespread use of mobile computing devices and smart phones technology, it makes sense for academic libraries to provide access to their collections and services in a way that works well with mobile devices. University libraries have a chance to be leaders in their campuses and larger community by realizing the possibilities of using mobile devices to bring services to their patrons.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the functions of librarians have indeed become both exciting and challenging following

the introduction of mobile devices. Shorunke, Ajayi and Akintola [6], opine that within the academia, among university faculty, Librarians are uniquely situated with a strong foundation in information literacy to guide and instruct the user community in becoming critical consumers of mobile devices for information exploration. The roles of librarians of the present age have expanded to include a curricular function of teaching research and technology skills that evolve as the society develops new technologies.

While many academic libraries are experimenting with the various types of services for users with mobile devices, Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari [3], observe that few are thinking of the potentially dramatic changes that the uptake of devices with sophisticated capabilities may have on their user community and more specifically on the use of digital information resources. As patrons continue to make greater use of the internet through mobile devices, creative librarians now use websites/portals as a means to facilitate access to digital resources. More so, because Nigerian academic libraries are starved of some of the needed funds, librarians can capitalize on exploitation of mobile devices for effective services delivery in Current Awareness Services (CAS); Selective Dissemination of Information; and knowledge sharing among others.

## 2. Types of Mobile Devices Used in Libraries

Mobile information services are not entirely new in librarianship. The first project designed to deliver handheld mobile access to library patrons began in 1993, the time of mainframe computers and Gopher. "Library Without A Roof" project partners included the University of Southern Alabama, AT&T, Bellsouth Cellular, and Notable Technologies, Inc. Library patrons at participating institutions could search and read electronic texts on their Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and search the library catalogue while browsing in physical collections [2]. In recent times, more devices have become even more capable and more common. Beside laptop computers, Saxena and Yadav [5], also identify smart phones, cell phones, iPods, MP3 players and tablets as some of the mobile devices used in academic libraries. The rapid pace of innovation in this arena continues to increase the potentials of these devices, challenging our ideas of how they should be used and presenting additional options with each new generation of mobile devices.

## 3. Mobile Information Services and Academic Libraries

Globally, digital technology is providing faster access to information and challenging the libraries to rethink and remodel their services by intelligently adopting and adapting to technological changes. The challenge for academic libraries will be to create compelling information services and to make digital content available in a way that the user community will find not only acceptable, but tailored to their needs. Students of nowadays are commonly referred to as millennial students because they grow up with mobile devices which is influencing the way they seek and use information. Saxena and Yadav [5], observe that in this changing scenario, mobile technology will be of great help to academic libraries towards strengthening their relationship and providing enhanced user oriented services to existing users as well as reach out to remote users who are considered unlikely to connect because of absence of a medium.

On such information services that can be rendered using mobile devices, Saxena and Yadav [5], identify MMS and SMS notification services; library virtual/audio tours; Quick Response (QR) codes on mobiles; text reference service, mobile document supply; library guide; database browsing; e-resource with mobile interfaces; formal education, distance learning and e-learning as some of the library services that can be provided to patrons via mobile technology.

Other mobile based library services include; OPAC on mobile phones; sending and receiving e-mail messages; searching databases of scholarly information; due date reminder and renewal services; preview and reservation service of new titles; voice and video calls; online in-house library bulletins; helpdesk services/Ask-a-librarian; online textbooks, databases and useful resources links; Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ); providing links to internet resources; online current awareness services; online list of new arrivals; etc [4].

Academic libraries in Nigeria can improve the quality of their services and widen their horizon by integrating mobile devices in their systems especially, because mobile access to the university resources makes good sense for both on-ground students, distance education population and students enrolled online. In delivering these services, librarians should ensure the adoption of online information improvement dimension which emphasizes; user friendliness; concise and short instruction for going online to search for information; more promotion and publicity; clear instruction on routine library services; clear and more understandable interface among others. These would no doubt boost the extent to which values are derived from mobile information services for the purpose of advancing academic librarianship in Nigeria.

## 4. Barriers to Mobile Information Services Delivery in Nigeria

That mobile information services is a 21<sup>st</sup> century reality and a step in the right direction for any academic library that wants to offer efficient and effective services is beyond any logical argument. However, myriads of barriers have continued to impede its comprehensive integration in the operations of academic libraries. Electricity failure; too many mobile devices to learn; lack of knowledge; slow speed of the internet; inadequate funds, staff and training opportunities in using mobile devices for marketing library and information products and services have been identified as some of the constraints to mobile information services delivery. Similarly, Shorunke, Ajayi and Akintola [6], observe that bandwidth problem; poor funding; technophobia; lack of good maintenance culture and unreliable power supply.

Highlighting the barriers to mobile information services, Saxena and Yadav [5], identify content ownership and licensing; high cost; limited memory of mobile devices; digital right management and dearth of technological expertise among staff. Other factors that can hinder mobile information services in Nigerian academic libraries are unsustainable technology strategies and policies; the problem of digital gap and insufficient IT training programs

## 5. Conclusion

Mobile information services are highly relevant to academic libraries in Nigeria especially the university libraries for the purpose of teaching and research. Academic librarians in universities should be very dynamic by embracing the trends of library and information services which include possessing quality information technology and information literacy skills in rendering mobile information services to the library users.

Also the members of the universities governing councils in Nigeria, including university librarians and other stakeholders of universities in Nigeria should pay more attention in funding University Libraries in Nigeria especially in the area of mobile information services delivery to enable these university libraries meet up to global standard of information services delivery.

## References

- [1] Adepetun, A. (2016). Smartphone Penetration Hits 30% in Nigeria. The Guardian Newspaper 08 July.
- [2] Dresselhaus, A. and Shrode, F. (2012). Mobile Technology and Academics: Do Students Use Mobile Technologies in their Academic Lives and are Librarians Ready to meet this Challenge? Information Technologies and Libraries. Vol. 7: 81-101.
- [3] Fasae, J.K and Adegbilero-Iwari, I. (2015). Social Media Use by Students in Colleges of Science in Two Selected Private Universities in south West, Nigeria. Middlebelt Journal of Library and Information Science. Vol. 13 (1): 1-15.
- [4] Hiremath, B. K. and Kenchakkanavar (2015). Mobile Technology Based Information Services in the Digital World. International Journal of Development Research. Vol. 5 (9): 5474-5477. Available at <http://www.journalijdr.com>. Retrieved on 30/11/2106.
- [5] Saxena, A. and Yadav, R. D. (2013). Impact of Mobile Technology on Libraries: a Descriptive Study. International Journal of Digital Library Services. Vol. 3(4): 1-13.
- [6] Shorunke, O.A, Ajayi, S. A. and Akintola, A. O. (2014). Social media Literacy for Patrons in the Information Age: a Role for Academic Librarians in Nigeria. Benue Journal of Library, Management and Information Science. Vol. 4(2): 73-87.