THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VIRTUAL LIBRARY PROJECT: THE FOUNTAIN UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Fountain University library fits into the world of innovation by encouraging information and communication technology. This paper reported how effort was been made by Fountain University library for the enactment the virtual library, the various challenges, and the actualization of the virtual library. The challenges include erratic power supply and computer systems are capital intensive and need funds to keep the project going, shortage of managerial and technical expertise in Nigeria, there is a need for greater commitment within academic circles, librarians to undertake training, and retraining in computer literacy, copyright holders have to be contacted and rights obtained. The paper thus concluded that there is still much to be done on virtual library in Fountain University.

Keywords: Virtual library, Fountain University, Private University.

INTRODUCTION

Information materials and services of libraries were in traditional ways, but in past 50–70 years, libraries have sincerely developed library services that exist without a physical building. The terms virtual library are used to refer to the vast collections of information to which people gain access remotely. The world is going through an IT revolution that has drastically changed many facets of the human life, from education, industry, economy, and politics to entertainments. The roles of university libraries as sources of learning, education, innovation and research, tools for social development, and as means of communication have become seriously eroded. It was suggested that for university libraries to cater effectively for the social, cultural, and developmental needs of library users in Nigeria, the virtual library has to be put in place.

Virtual library has capabilities of the information technology to process, store, refine and disseminate data, information, and knowledge in a variety of ways across geographical boundaries had changed the ways in which the public and the private university libraries operate globally. The National University Commission has mandated the establishment of virtual libraries in all higher institution of learning in Nigeria because of the high value placed on the availability of information. The increasing acceptance of virtual library might be due to the diverse resources that they contain the options for what they can include are virtually endless, as well as becoming more and more boundless as technology advances. The e-libraries are "a set of electronic resources and associated technical capabilities" and that are designed to serve specific users community (Buckland, 2012).

In the same vein, Gani and Magoi [3] submitted that the existence of virtual library indicates that library services would be available to anyone, at any time or place, to access a library's enormous book collection using the Internet. It is even believed that one can use all the books in a library's collection without actually going to the library.

Trivedi [11] defined virtual library as "a library in which collections resources are stored in digital formats (as opposed to print, microform, or other media) and accessible by computers or electronically." Gapen [4] stated that, virtual libraries as the concept of remote access to the contents and services of libraries and other information materials. Digital library and virtual library are used interchangeably. The term "virtual library" or "library without physical walls" usually refers to the meta resources, subject portals that extend the virtual accessibility of digital collections from several diverse sources without the clients even aware where the materials actually reside. Li and Furht [6] stated that digital libraries are systems that combine the machinery of digital computing storage and communication, in which the content and software needed to reproduce, emulate, and extend that services of collecting, cataloging, finding, and disseminating information offered by traditional libraries based on paper and other materials. A virtual library would potentially be enormous, linking huge materials from all around the globe, or it could not be much but consisting of few hundred links to digital resources maintained by an individual. Okiy [10] quoting Covi and Cragin (2004) in their own view opined that Nigerian tertiary institutions have increasingly demanded and preferred access to electronic sources delivery and networked information from their respective libraries. This is why librarians must endeavor to equip themselves with technological skills that will be useful for their jobs.

The application of information and communication technology has aid all facets of world system such as knowledge dissemination, social interaction, business practices, political engagement, media, education, health, leisure, and entertainment. Ani [2] agrees that the application of ICT in library and information services facilitates the provision of timely information in the universities which lead to maximal benefit and increased research productivity. Foster *et al*. (2008) and Frankor and Akussah (2012) similarly conclude that if staff and students in universities in developing countries, especially in Africa have access to relevant electronic information resources, it is likely to improve the quality of their research and promote an increase in research productivity and publication. Adeniran [1] sums it all that correct application of information and communication technology is drastically affecting all facets of the world system which includes the library institutions. These innovations are forming the bedrock for libraries' transition to environments of electronic services which are built on computer networks.

In furtherance, Makhanya [7] affirms that libraries that have applied information technology in their services have experienced dramatic transformations. Ogunsola [9] stated that libraries went through a metamorphosis from a manual system to a technologically driven. The technology-driven environment has enveloped the library and is taking it to unprecedented heights in knowledge acquisition, management, and communication. Okiy [10] stated that the main duty of academic libraries is to make available the necessary information to the lecturers