

Online Arabic Information Resource in Nigerian University Libraries - An Overview

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Abstract - *Online Information Resources today, are becoming more popular than traditional print resources due to their portability, flexibility, and instant availability of up-to-date information sources. Due to the paradigm shift, more than ever, libraries are also spending a substantial amount of their budget on online information resources and services. The paper discusses the concept of Arabic information resources explaining that "Arabic information resources are documents and other non-book resources in Arabic and English languages provided to satisfy the information needs of customers with Arabic language background. Such resources include book of syntax, philology Morphology. Online Arabic information resource were highlighted and examples of online Arabic resources such as online EALL, Arabica, ajarry, waqfeya, Maktabu-Shammela, Maktabu Lugatul-Arabiyyah. E-books, e-journals, e-newspapers, e-magazines accessed through computer and Internet technologies were discussed. It concluded that the customers of University libraries can get quality information from Internet services and databases the libraries subscribed to for the Academics and customers in general.*

Key Words: E-resources, Arabic information resources, online Arabic databases, University libraries, Academics, customers.

1.INTRODUCTION

Information is seen as basic ingredient for personal, social and national development. It's a vital to the overall academic development of university libraries. Thus, it has to be stored and transmitted in both print and electronic devices for access by its customers.

The advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) introduced new dimensions in the generation, acquisition, organization, processing and dissemination information in virtual environment. The ICTs help information users to search, access information regardless of time, distance, location, size and language. The ICTs bring information at the fingertips of information seekers. Libraries use information technology for better services and satisfy diverse user needs (Kattimani and Kamble 2007). Libraries have transformed into digital and virtual libraries where physical books, journals and magazines, \newspapers, thesis and PhD dissertations have changed into e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers, e-magazines e-thesis, e-dissertations etc. Online information resources are easily accessed in remote areas. Electronic resources

solve storage problems and control the flood of information where print sources are being digitised because of the value of information in the life of human endeavor (Ray and Nalvalkal, 2009).

2.INFORMATION RESOURCES

Information resources are items containing information. They are also defined as anything that (customers) consult and obtain information (Keith, 2004). Within the context of library and information studies, information resources can be described as including any information in electronic, audio-visual or physical form, or any hardware or software that make possible the storage of information (University of otah, 2010). Information resources consist of all the collection of a library including prints and non-print provided with a review to satisfying information needs of the users to help them perform better in their chosen areas of studies. Such resources include books, journals, reference books, computers and related electronic gadgets. These are usually consulted by customers due to their information contents whether in print or electronic format.

3.ARABIC INFORMATION RESOURCES

Arabic Information resources refer to information sources or resources written in Arabic on various subjects. They are resources that are usually found in Arabic division of the different libraries and information centers. The resources can be in print, non print and electronic media. They are usually consulted by customers with Arabic language.

On the other hand, Arabic information resources could be said to consist of documents and other non-book resources in Arabic and English languages provided to satisfy the information needs of customers with Arabic language background (Hafeez, 2006). Such resources include books of syntax (Nahwul-wadhihi), books of Rhetoric (Balagah), Morphology (Sarf) books of literature (Adab), philology (Fiqh al-luggah) Arudiy, Arabic Dictionaries and encyclopedias, Arabic magazines and newspapers in print and electronic formats. They may include print journals, magazines, newspapers, print book, DVD/Video tape, Radio and Television broadcasting. The non prints or Internet based formats include. E-journals, E-books, E-thesis, E-newspapers,(HTML or Acrobat pdf), streaming videos, podcasting etc. Some of the Internet based resource may be accessed automatically via a University's IP address or using

a given password to restrict access. The purpose of the information resources is to provide knowledge, fact, ideas and opinion on variety of subjects to the customers.

4.ONLINE ARABIC INFORMATION RESOURCES

E-resources are generally in the form of E-books, E-journals, E-magazines, OPACs, Online databases, Internet resources, e-mail publishing, wireless publishing, and web publishing etc. These are available either through Open Access international donors or commercial vendors examples Escohost, Hinary, DOAJ, Science direct, SAGE. The resources (e-resources) have become a major element of University libraries collections worldwide. Sharma (2009) identifies e-resources to include e-journals, data archives, manuscripts, maps, e-books, e-magazines, e-theses, e-dissertation, e-newspapers, e-mail, research reports, and online databases. However, Ibrahim (2004) adds library websites, online catalogues.

The online Arabic information resources are sources or resource within Arabic language accessed through Internet, Intranet and network. The online Arabic information resources include e-journals, e-books (HTML or Acrobat Pdf), e-newspapers, e-magazines, streaming videos, podcasting, V. casting etc. (Hafez, 2006). Arabica, Islamqa, al-badr, ajurry, EALL online, waqfeya, Maktabu-Shamela, Maktabu Lugatul-Arabiyyah Emerald, Ebsco, Arab e-marefa, Arabic papyrology database (Ebscohost) and Arabica, Hinari, Maktabu-Shamela, Maktabu Lugatul-Arabiyyah, are the example of online Arabic information resource. Yahnah (2011) includes C, alislamhouse, Islam-L. Some of the Internet resources are accessible automatically via a University's IP address or by using a restricted password. Online Arabic information resources like other e-resources, that are needed to support the relevant university staffs academic work such as teaching, learning, research and self and community development.

Arab e-marefa, Arabic papyrology database (Ebscohost) and Arabica, Hinari, Maktabu-Shamela and online Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics are available and meant to satisfy the following categories of customers as appropriate. These categories cut across almost all fields including Arabic and Islamic studies that exist today. The categories are Arabic and Islamic studies teachers in secondary schools, Arabic and Islamic studies Diploma students, Arabic and Islamic studies Undergraduate and Postgraduate students, Researchers, Academics as well as the entire users that understand Arabic language in the University community.

4.1.Online Arabic information resources/databases Available in the University Libraries

Haridasan S, and Khan's M (2009) research study indicated that there exists awareness of e-resources (such as e-books, e-journals, e-encyclopedias, e-theses, CD-ROM databases, e-mail, internet based resource and the OPAC) among research scholars. (Ojedokun and Owolabi, 2003). Badu and Markwei (2005) found out that e-journals and other e-resources are available for academics staffs of Karachi. Similarly Kinengyere (2007), found out e-journals and other e-resources is not necessarily accessed and used by users. The study shows that the availability of information does not necessarily mean actual use, because the academician may not be aware of the availability of such resources, they do not know how to access these resources. Sharma, H. (2009), Borrego (2007), and Ibrahim, (2004) have all reported that e-journals are the most used among the arrays of available electronic resources. Falk, (2005) reviewed library on-line databases of United States libraries and described the availability of on-line databases for library patrons in the USA. The major findings were (i) on-line databases are now widely available to library patrons in the United States, and many patrons can tap into these databases from their own computers; and (ii) larger libraries and library systems can afford to offer their own choice of databases to their patrons through their web sites.

4.2.Online Arabic information resources available for the Academics Activities

Information sources especially On-line and the CD-ROMs have become a sources of public wealth. They are tangible objects for information transfer both in sciences, technologies and humanities. Some of the resources currently available and use by the research scholar in some Universities as described by hafiz and Abdullahi (2006) (2003) are:-

4.3.The Arabic Papyrology (Ebscohost and DOAJ):

Is the first electronic compilation of Arabic papyri. It is non-commercial project running under the patronage of the international society for Arabic Papyrology and a partner of the Trismegistos metadata project of Greek, Dometic, Arabic, etc. the documents. Access is free via the internet.

4.4.Arab e-Marafa (Ebscohost and DOAJ):

Is the leading Arabic language research database providing full text for 950 academic journals and statistical reports issued by various bodies in the Arabic world including universities, research centers, and public statistical departments, central banks, scientific association and regional organizations. The database provides international standard bibliographic records for almost 70,000 articles plus the access to these articles. Additional content includes thousands of dissertation and over 7,000 book reviews.

4.5.Brill online (Journal of Arabic Literature)

Since its inception in 1970 the Journal of Arabic Literature has provided an international scholarly forum for the discussion of Arabic literature and has secured its position at the forefront of critical and methodological debate. The journal publishes literary, critical and historical studies, as well as reviews and bibliographies, on a broad range of Arabic materials – classical and modern, written and oral, poetry and prose, literary and colloquial.

4.6.Arabica online:

Is a multidisciplinary academic journal with an international editorial board representing various fields of research, specializing in language, literature, history, thought, and civilizations of the Arab speaking world in both a classical and contemporary context.

4.7.JAIS online database:

The Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies (JAIS) is an international, peer-reviewed, open access, academic journal. It is also the world's most widely read journal in the field of Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. With aims of the journal is to promote the study of history, language, literature and culture through the publication of research articles.

4.8.EALLO database:

The Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics Online comprehensively cover all aspects of Arabic languages and linguistics. It is interdisciplinary in scope and represents different schools and approaches in order to be as objective and versatile as possible. The Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics Online is cross-searchable and cross-referenced, and is equipped with a browsable index. All relevant fields in Arabic linguistics, both general and language specific are covered and the Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics Online includes topics from interdisciplinary fields, such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and computer science.

4.9.Online Journals of Islamic Studies Religion:

Is Publishes research articles, notes, comments, review-articles and book reviews in all disciplines of Islamic Studies including the Qur'an, Hadith, Tafsir, Sirah, 'Ilm al-Kalam, Jurisprudence, Fiqh, Law, Religion, Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Culture, Civilization, Political Science, Economics, Language, Literature, History, Science and Technology.

4.10.Journal of Islamic And Arabic Education:

JIAE is devoted to the dissemination of research concerning Islamic and Arabic Education. It is published twice a year on the Web. JIAE is a fully internet and refereed journal. It publishes articles, research studies, reports and book reviews related to teaching and learning Islamic and Arabic Studies.

4.11.Islamway online:

Is an Islamic project aimed at contributing strongly in the Islamic media, and keep up with the tremendous technological advances in the world around. A site aims to provide intelligent, authoritative responses to anyone questions about Islam, whether it is from a Muslim or a non-Muslim, in different languages (www.islamway.net)

4.12.Waqfeya

It contains a lot useful online Arabic and Islamic studies books, journal articles, international newspapers on philology and literature: www.waqfeya.net

4.13.Bard-AI:

This is the personal website of Shaikh Abdurrazzaaq Abdul-Muhsen Al-Badr. It contains a lot of useful books, articles and lectures. (Arabic and English) Short Link: <http://IslamHouse.com/318424>

4.14.IslamQA

Is a global Sunni Islamic website on the Internet providing information regarding Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims in twelve languages. (www.islm-qa.com)

4.15.Islamhouse:

Website based on the Quran and the Sunnah, offering trusted and reviewed materials in more than 100 languages! (www.islamhouse.com)

Index Islamicus database which is a comprehensive index to publications on Arabic and Islamic subjects throughout the world. Records cover almost 100 years, from 1906 to the present. The scope includes the Middle East, the Muslim areas of Asia and Africa, plus Muslim minorities elsewhere in the world. Over 3,000 journals are monitored for inclusion, together with conference proceedings, monographs, multi-authored works and book reviews. Journals and books are indexed down to the article and chapter level.

4.16.Oxford Islamic Studies Onlin

Brings together the best current scholarship in the field for students, scholars, government officials, community groups, and librarians to foster a more accurate and informed understanding of the Islamic world.

4.17.Arabwp online:

Website, constructed by the National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education (NITEL) and funded by the Mellon Foundation, is a comprehensive online presentation of the Arab world. It is divided up into the following teaching and learning modules: history, ethnicity and identity, Islam, Arab Americans, literature and philosophy, popular culture and the performing arts, family and society, art and architecture, the Arabic language, and lastly, geography, demographics, and resources

4.18.Askzad online:

All subjects covered in Arabic language 100 % full text, more than 350 Arabic newspapers, magazines and limited journals from 1997 onwards.

4.19.AIslam-L online:

For scholarly discussion of the history of Islam.

The ATLA Religion Database (Ebsco Host) is an index of academic articles in the area of religion. It is updated quarterly by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA). The database indexes journal articles, essays and book reviews related to a wide range of scholarly fields related to religion. The database is available on a subscription basis through a database aggregator. The total database includes over 1.8 million article citations from over 1,700 journals. There are more than a quarter of a million essay citations from more than 18,000 multi-author works. The number of book reviews is over half a million. ATLA indexes multi-author works, such as Festschriften and conference proceedings, with separate records for each Scholarly fields with significant degrees of coverage includes: Ancient History, Anthropology, Archaeology, Bible, Ethics, Religious studies, Philosophy, Human Culture & Society, World Religions and languages (Arabic and Islamic, Hinduism religious) etc.

4.20.Nexis UK

Is an aggregated collection of newspapers, magazines, newswires and broadcasts (including BBC Monitoring Online) from around world. It is mainly in English and Arabic covers archives of newspapers going back up 30 years.

Factiva factiva is similar to Nexis UK, but the coverage includes publications in more than 25 languages (including Arabic, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and many others)

4.21.SAGE, OARE:

This provides online access to research in environment (Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Journal of performance and art) etc.

However, in a similar review that Latifa and Shaalan, (2006) in their study found that 85% of their respondents graded themselves as 'average' in the use of computers, very few rated themselves as 'experts' (4.1%). While 10% accepted that they were 'complete Most of the institutes and universities provide on-line Arabic databases to their users to support teaching, research and development. The literature shows on-line Arabic databases with their retrieval network capabilities, have been gradually replacing many of their printed counterparts.

5.Internet access as a means for accessing online Arabic information resources by Academics

The Internet and the web are constantly influencing the development of new modes of scholarly communication; their potential for delivering goods is quite vast, as they overcome successfully the geographical limitations associated with the print media. Also, the distribution time between product publication and its delivery has been drastically reduced.

According to Ojedokun and Owolabi, 2003; Badu and Markwei 2005 postulated that Academics in developing countries are fast adapting to the Internet as a source of information for teaching, learning and research. The Internet is very important for university libraries for efficient retrieval and meeting of information needs since most of them call for more research work.

Jagboro (2003) reveals that respondents use the Internet to access research materials and for e-mail. The study concludes that the use of Internet for academic activities would improve significantly with more access in departments.

Ohakire (2006) and Okwuanaso (2006) maintained that the Internet as an instrument for research and communication has opened up numerous possibilities for resource sharing at local and global levels and information on latest journals, books and transactions can be exchanged directly through the Internet. This has caused many libraries to move towards digital e-resources, which preferably is less expensive and more useful for easy access.

Azubogu and Madu (2007) observed that academic staffs of the Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria, have resorted to the use of computer and Internet technologies to search for information because the university library lacks funds to subscribe to scholarly and research journals. is the world's most efficient means of communication when compared to other sources. However, Oketunji (2001) opined that the functions of internet has always been to provide a way for academic staff to have better access to each other and as tool to facilitate research.

Owolabi and Attama (2007) maintained that academic institutions in developing countries especially in Africa cannot afford to ignore the potentials of the internet if their teaching and scholars would make appreciable impact in the global information age.

It also, revealed that the researchers of the university were getting quality information through the internet most of academics search information through the Internet because the university library had provided access to the various databases and online journals for all the academics and students in general. Academics use the opportunity of Internet to associate with colleagues who have made important contributions to human knowledge.

6.CONCLUSION

Online Arabic information resources like other resources in the University Libraries are needed to support the information needs of their customers, because they are more convenient to search and access vast amount of information within shortest possible time. Online Arabic information resource played a vital role in teaching, learning, research self and community development in the present day. However, must lecturers in our academic institutions have less aware with this latest development in spite of the fact that they are essential tools in the discharging their duties. Therefore, it has become so important for all academics and student to imbibe the culture of using online Arabic information resources. Likewise the university libraries should do more in subscribing and making the online Arabic information resources available so as to meet up the challenges of the current generation.

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