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**Electronic Resources Usage in Private Universities: Evidence from Valley View University, Ghana**

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**Abstract**

This study concentrates on the awareness, access, purpose, frequency of use of electronic resources and the challenges users face when accessing electronic resources in the library. Four hundred and sixty-six (466) respondents were used for the study. The questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. The study disclosed that users use the electronic resources for research, teaching and learning purposes. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 16.0) was used for the data analysis. The study recommended that there is the urgent need to market the electronic resources available in the academic libraries to encourage its fullest use.

**Keywords:** access, challenges, frequency, electronic resources, purpose

## INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are considered as the backbone and hub of universities which serves the need of students, faculty, and researchers to conduct their research. These activities turn to broaden their knowledge in their respective field of learning. Currently, "information is considered as an essential commodity in all spheres of life like land, capital, human resource and labour because of its dynamic nature". The academic environment is witnessing the revolution of information technology thereby making it possible for academic libraries to embrace the need for electronic sources (Adegboire, 2011).

The online dictionary of library and information science (2004) defines electronic information as "material consisting data and/or computer program(s) encoded for reading and manipulated by a computer, through the use of a peripheral device directly connected to the computer such as a CD-Rom drive or remotely via network such as the internet". Currently, information is not limited or restricted to the walls of the particular library but transcends the borders of geographical boundaries. The "introduction of information technology in academic libraries has drastically changed library activities such as cataloging, circulation desk services, reference services and subscription to online journals"(Online Dictionary of Information Science, 2004).

Ani (2008) disclosed that the movement from the print medium to electronic resources is an indication that electronic resources are taking over the place of print materials due to the fast development of electronic information. As a result, it has also offered users with new ways and methods of searching and retrieval of information from databases.

Dadzie (2007) states that "the benefits derived from electronic resources far outweigh the print-based resources in a traditional library setting". Dadzie enumerated some of the benefits as; "quick access to information that might be constrained or limited to the client because of geographical boundaries or lack of adequate funds, access to up-to-date information, and provision of general networks to additional resources related to the study area". Naidu (2007) on the other hand, opined that "the emergence of information technology and electronic resources in academic libraries has facilitated the rate of publication by researchers due to the availability of information on the desktop". The struggle for adequate space in academic libraries all over the world has empowered librarians to embrace the introduction of electronic resources in university libraries in order to save space for other library resources including the Valley View University, Ghana.

The main objective of every academic library is to support teaching, learning and research activities of the parent university. "University libraries today are confronted with inadequate budget allocations, the rapid rise of patron's demands, the increment in prices of books and irregular supply of periodic subscriptions to journals". It is obvious that the growth of electronic resources has far exceeded that of their print counterparts as argued by (Dalgeish & Hall, 2000).

Despite the numerous advantages that electronic resources have over the print resources, a study carried out by Ansari and Zuberi (2010) in Asia on the use of e-resources at the University of Karachi revealed that majority of the users do not have training on how to access electronic resources. A similar study in Africa by Bankole (2012) on the use of the electronic database by scientists at Olabisi Onabanjo University-Nigeria, also disclosed that quite a number of the users do not use the library's free online databases such as AGORA and HINARI because they are not aware of the resources. The management of Valley View University allocates a colossal sum of money in every academic year to purchase and subscribe to electronic resources to support teaching, learning, and research. Preliminary investigation by the researcher appeared that the electronic resources are not used as expected.

Again, reviewing the literature on the use of electronic resources in academic libraries revealed in Pauline (2013; Thanuskdis, 2012) the electronic resources were underutilized in Nigeria and India respectively. Again, Dadzie (2005) carried out a study entitled "electronic resources: access and usage at Ashesi University College Campus in Ghana". However, there is no study on the usage of electronic resources by faculty and students of a fast growing private university like Valley View University. This inspired the researchers to conduct a study to probe into the usage of electronic resources in the library in order to inform the management about the extent of usage.

The research seeks to:

- Investigate the awareness of electronic resources in Valley View University library.
- Find out the level of accessibility of e-resources in Valley View University library.
- Examine the purpose of use of electronic resources usage in the library.
- Determine the frequency of using electronic resources in the library.
- Find out the challenges users face when accessing electronic resources.

The questions therefore are:

- What is the level of awareness of the electronic resources in the library?
- What is the intensity of access to electronic resources in the library?

What are the purposes of using electronic resources in the library?

How frequently do users use electronic resources in the library?

What are some of the challenges users face when accessing electronic information?

The findings of the present study will contribute largely in enhancing the full utilization of the electronic resources in the library. It will again provide information to management to know the types of resources that are underutilized and build a balance and strong collection. The findings of the study will put to bear the challenges facing users when accessing the electronic resources. The outcome of this study will serve as a fountain of knowledge for future studies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Awareness of electronic resources**

Ojo and Akande (2005) carried out a survey to examine students' access, usage and awareness of electronic information resources at the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, Nigeria. The study revealed that the level of usage of the electronic information resources was not encouraging due to the low level of information retrieving skills, thereby making their usage difficult. Verma (2008) conducted a study on the impact of electronic journals at the Indian Institute of technology, Delhi, and the findings disclosed that the usage of e-journals is growing fast because of awareness among the users and the importance of electronic resources. The study added that the resources were available and can be accessed at different locations in the institute. Thus, users can access these resources from any part of the university environment without necessarily visiting the library. According to Khan (2008) in his paper titled "Use of e-journals by research scholars at Aligarh Muslim University and Banaras Hindu University" reported that majority of the research scholars were aware of the availability of electronic information and they mostly used them for reference purposes in their research activities.

Kinengyere (2006) carried out a study to examine four academic and research institutions in Uganda. The results indicated that available resources were not utilized because users were not aware of the resources, did not know how to access them, or they did not know the importance of the resources. The study highlighted that availability of information does not necessarily mean usage.

Ashcroft (2000) opines that for users to value library services and utilize their electronic resources, the users need to be aware of the available resources in the library and how to access the material they need, whether in electronic format or paper-based. The findings of Chandra et al. (2014) in their study on Use Pattern of E-Resources among

Faculty members in Arts and Science Colleges in Chennai revealed that majority of the participants were aware of e-resources available in their college library. According to the participants, e-resources have contributed largely to their study and research purposes.

### **Accessibility of Electronic Resources**

Oduwole and Akpati (2003) conducted a study on the accessibility and retrieval of electronic information at the University of Agriculture Library, Abeokuta, Nigeria. The results indicated that all members in the University environment had access to internet connectivity, they found the resources easy to use, and they were satisfied with their search outputs. A similar study carried out by Jagboro (2003) and Oduwole (2004) reported that students get access to electronic resources more from private cybercafés because of its closeness.

Bar-Ilan and Finka (2005) discovered that users at the Hebrew University have shifted to the use of electronic journals because the resources are accessible to them though the print format was still available. According to Okorie and Agboola (2012) the key benefits of e-resources to academic libraries today is the growth of accessibility of information sources that are up-to-date and significant to research, learning and studying. Madhusudhan et al.(2008) indicated that eighty-six percent (86%)of students accessed e-journals from the university community. In the case of the foreign universities, students get access to electronic resources on and off-campus. It can be at their halls, classrooms, homes, offices among others, whether the university library is opened or not (Min & Yi, 2010).

### **Purpose of using Electronic Resources**

A study carried out by Owolabi et al (2012) on the use of electronic information sources by faculty members in four Nigerian universities disclosed that most of the academic staff were utilizing the electronic sources for research, teaching and learning purposes .Bar-Ilan, Peritz, and Wolman (2003)study reported that majority of the participants, 69.2% revealed that they use databases and electronic journals for both teaching and research, compared with 23.9% who use them exclusively for research and only 0.6% who use them exclusively for teaching. A similar study by Kumar and Kumar (2008) highlighted reasons for using electronic information sources. The participants disclosed that electronic sources support their study (70%) and teaching (59%). One-third of participants claimed that they use electronic resources for project work. 80% of medical science patrons accessed electronic information sources for study, followed by engineering (67%) and management studies (55%).

A study by Ansari and Zuberi (2010) accounts that about one-third (32%) of the participants use electronic resources for research activities. About one-quarter (29.4%) use it to prepare lectures notes and 24.8% use it to broaden their subject knowledge.

The study of Madhusudhan (2008) revealed that sixty-nine percent (69%) of engineering students use electronic journals for research and 24% use electronic resources to update knowledge. Rehman and Ramzy (2004) conducted a study on awareness and use of electronic information resources among health academics. Their findings indicated that users use electronic resources comprehensively for research purposes, preparation of lecture notes and for obtaining up-to-date information.

### **Frequency of Using Electronic Resources**

Bar-Ilan and Finka (2005) buttressed in their study that more than 80% of their respondents frequently use and prefer electronic resources. On the contrary, results from the study carried out by Bashorun, Issah and Adisa (2011) disclosed that the frequency of use of electronic resources by academic staff at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria was poor. Nallathamb and Kanakaraj (2012) established that majority of the participants in the engineering colleges use electronic resources daily.

A study by Bashorun (2011) disclosed that frequency of use of electronic information resources by academic staff and students of the University of Ilorin was not encouraging. The study enumerated challenges such as lack of awareness of electronic information resources provided by the library; power outage, ineffective communication channels, slow speed of the network and inadequate searching skills. Madhusudhan (2008) carried out a study on the use of electronic resources by teachers, students and research scholars of universities and research organizations. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the respondents indicated that the use of the UGC - Infonet e-journals has elevated their research activities and they wanted up-to-date article and electronic document to facilitate their studies. A study carried out by Natarajan et al., (2010) ascertained that frequency of electronic resources usage in Annamalai University was not encouraging in spite of its wide range and availability. They enumerated some limitations as; insufficient time, lack of awareness, poor subject coverage, and difficulty in downloading.

### **Challenges of Using Electronic Resources**

Oduwole and Akpati (2003) enumerated some challenges associated with the use of electronic resources. These challenges include an inadequate number of terminals available and erratic power supply. Natarajan et al., (2010) also listed some challenges that hinder the use of electronic resources as; insufficient time, lack of awareness, poor

subject coverage, and difficulty in downloading. Ali (2005) revealed that 83% of the students he surveyed accepted that using electronic resources saves time, and it is relatively easy to use. Two-thirds of those surveyed affirmed that they prefer waiting for busy CD-ROM than going for the print tool. However, a study of online searching of scientific information in science and technology libraries of Delhi disclosed that a significant number of users (60%) were confronted with many problems such as lack of searching skills, lack of trained staff and poor terminals while browsing electronic information.

Ajuwon (2003) carried out a study of update of ICTs by health science students at the University College Hospital, Ibadan. The study indicated that 57% of the students sampled could not use a computer; the use of the database was poor due to lack of awareness, lack of access to computers, insufficient training and the high cost of provision. Okiki and Asiru (2011) opined that slow internet connectivity and incessant power outage are some of the challenges that affect the use of electronic resources. In a similar study by Ojokoh and Asaolu (2005) they affirmed that slow internet connectivity and regular power failure in Nigeria are the problems that affect the use of electronic resources.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive survey with the use of a questionnaire as the main instrument for data gathering. The stratified sampling technique was used to group the respondents into strata. The population for the study was four thousand, two hundred and thirty-two (4232) which comprises four thousand one hundred and twenty-seven (4,127) students and one hundred and five (105) faculty members of Valley View University.

**Table: 1 Population of Study**

Faculty members	Breakdown		Total
	Male = 69	Female =36	
Students	Male=2265	Female =1862	4,127
<b>Total</b>			4,232

**Source:** Field work, 2016.

**Table 2: Breakdown of Population**

Faculty Members	Breakdown		Total
	Male = $69/100 \times 50 = 35$	Female = $36/100 \times 50 = 18$	
Students	Male = $2265/100 \times 10 = 227$	Female = $1862/100 \times 10 = 186$	413
Total			466

**Source:** Field work, 2016.

The above Tables (1&2) show how the population was selected and the percentage used to arrive at the sample size. In the view of Bernard (2012), if a population of a study is less than two hundred (200), the entire population should be used for the study. But the simple random technique was used to select students. Due to the small number of the faculty members, 50 percent was used to arrive at a sample size for both male and female. For the students, 10 percent was used to arrive at a sample size of four hundred and thirteen(413) due to their higher population. The sample size of the entire study constituted four hundred and sixty-six (466) participants. According to Nwana (1981) if a population is in many hundreds, one needs a sample size of 20%, but if a population is in few thousands, one needs a sample size of 10%. Therefore, a sampling fraction of 10% was used to select a sample of four hundred and thirteen (413) students.

### Sampling Technique

The stratified sampling technique was used to gather the respondents into strata; that is, students and lecturers. Stratified sampling is used when the researcher is uncertain whether the individuals in the population will be represented effectively when using the simple random sampling (Nsawah-Nuamah, 2005). Four hundred and sixty-six (466) copies of the questionnaire were distributed and out of this number, 438 were retrieved from the respondents, representing 94% response rate. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 16.0 version) was used in data analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table 3: Gender of Respondents**

Responses	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Female	186	42
Male	256	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2015.

From table 3, out of 438 respondents captured for the study, 186(42%) were female while 256(58%) were male.



**Table 4: Awareness level of Electronic Resources in the Library**

Responses	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Aware	248	57
Not aware	190	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2015.

Table 4 above represents the respondents' awareness level of electronic resources in the library. From the Table, 248 (57%) respondents indicated that they were aware of electronic resources while 190 (43%) said they were not aware of E- resources in the library. This study disagrees with the study of Kinengyere (2006) who carried out a study to examine four academic and research institutions in Uganda which revealed that available resources were not utilized because users were not aware of the resources.

**Table 5: Access to the Electronic Resources in the library**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Yes	401	92	
No	37	8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2016.

From Table 5 which is a representation of the respondents' access to electronic resources in the library. 92% of the respondents indicated that they have access, but 8% said they do not have access to electronic resources. This study compares favourably with the work of Bar-Ilan and Finka (2005) which posited that users at the Hebrew University have shifted to the use of electronic journals because the resources are accessible to them though the print format was still available.

**Table 6: Purpose of using Electronic Resources in library**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
It saves time	57	13
To prepare lecture notes	62	14
To do update of knowledge	110	25
To do research	209	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6 sought to find out the purpose for using electronic journals, it shows that 209 (48%) use the E-resources to do their research and 110(25%) use it to update their knowledge. This finding is in agreement with Madhusudhan (2008) whose study revealed that 69% of engineering college students used electronic journals for research and 24% used electronic resources to update their knowledge. The finding is in line with the study carried out by Owolabi et al. (2012) on the use of electronic resources by faculty members in four Nigerian universities which indicated that most of the academic staff are utilizing the electronic resources for research, teaching and learning purposes.

**Table 7: Frequent use of Electronic Resources by Students**

Responses	Daily		Weekly		Monthly	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
Online Databases	147	34	129	29	78	18
Electronic books	105	23	119	27	132	30
Electronic Journals	157	36	87	20	143	33
Electronic Newspapers	29	7	103	24	85	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork,2016.

From Table 7, 34% of the respondents use online databases daily, and 29% use it weekly while 18% use it monthly. Again, on the use of E-Newspapers, out of 438, 29(7%) of the respondents admitted that they use E-Newspapers daily, 24% use them weekly and 19% use them monthly. The findings from table 7 confirmed that majority of users use the E- resources daily. The finding agrees with Nallathamb and Kanakaraj (2012) that majority of the respondents were using electronic resources in the engineering college daily.

**Table 8: Challenges faced when using Electronic Resources in the Library**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate computers	90	21
Difficult to login	16	3
Unreliable power supply	175	40
Low bandwidth	25	6
Slow internet System	132	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2015

Table 8 represents the challenges users face when using electronic resources in the library. Out of 438 respondents, 175(40%) reported that unreliable power supply in the library was their bigger challenge in using electronic resources, followed by slow internet connectivity which represents 132 (30%). This finding is in line with a study Okiki & Asiru (2011) and that of Ojokoh & Asaolu (2005) that slow internet connectivity and unreliable power supply are the problems that affect the use of electronic resources.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study disclosed that electronic resources are available at the university library and majority of the users are aware of them. The study also reported that users use electronic information sources for research purposes, to update their knowledge, to prepare their lecture notes and for assignments purposes. The major problem hindering their usage is the unreliable power supply and slow speed of internet connectivity.

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made to the library management:

The management should improve power supply in the library to ensure a regular flow of power to enable users to have access to the electronic resources at all times. For instance, standby generator could be acquired for the library, so that as soon as there is a power cut, it can be turned on. Moreover, management should increase the bandwidth of the university, specifically that of the library to make searching faster. This will avoid students queuing.

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