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## **An Assessment of Features and Services of University Library Website: A Case Study of Ibrahim Babangida Library Website Modibbo Adama University Yola Adamawa State**

BY

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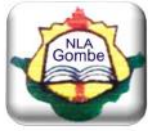
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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the contents and services of academic library websites in Nigeria with a view to identifying the extent to which they effectively facilitate access to electronic resources, provide online library services, and provide their patrons with contact and general information on the services they provide. A case study of Ibrahim Babangida Library website, Modibbo Adama University, Yola. Data were collected by visiting the library websites through their University homepage. The study revealed that even though Nigerian academic libraries have made their presence online by deploying a library website, many of them do not use their library websites to provide their patrons with contact and general information on the services they provide and facilitate access to their resources. The study recommends the redesign of the library websites to make them more effective in order to contain all that is available in the library without necessarily visiting the library.*

**Keywords:** academic library, library website, electronic resources, open access

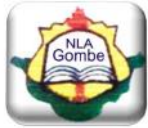


## **Introduction**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought tremendous transformation to academic libraries and information services. Such areas of transformation and development occasioned by ICTs in academic libraries include computing technology, communication technology, and mass storage technology. This has reshaped the way that libraries access, retrieve, store, manipulate, and disseminate information to the users. Especially after the emergence of the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW), website development has increased rapidly in number. Libraries have started creating a specific place on the Internet via their websites and extended their scope to worldwide clients. In this way, they are serving remote users with their resources and services in an efficient way (Brown & Adler, 2008).

Academic library websites, particularly university library websites, offer sophisticated digital resources, full-text databases, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), research tools, and useful links for research and educational purposes. They generally allow remote access to digital resources across a network 24 hours a day and seven days a week. They replicate certain library services in physical form into a networked environment by offering electronic forms on the web pages. Users can submit short reference inquiries, suggestions for collection development, interlibrary loan (ILL) requests, reservation of particular materials, etc. Many academic libraries just place such forms on the Internet and provide limited services online. They offer general information about the library such as introduction, opening hours, staff, printed materials, OPAC, or selected links available on the Internet (Hiong, 2000).

Kehinde & Tella (2012) most efficiently describe the significance of academic library websites; these sites give “academic libraries the leverage and ammunition they need to outperform competitor websites and regain the loyalty of students, teachers, and researchers alike.” Because users are utilizing resources online more and more often, the library’s web presence must be able to fit their users’ needs. However, despite the importance of the website to libraries, the libraries’ websites are found not to meet up with the users’ expectations and needs. Gbaje & Kotso (2014) summarize the limitations as lack of access to quality electronic resources. Many studies attribute the limitations of the library websites to unfriendly interfaces, usability problems, and lack of sufficient information on the website to meet users’ needs, acute shortage of digital systems librarians, information and web technology literate staff in libraries to install and manage technology networks, difficulty providing users’ needs as a result of lack of proper development and maintenance of the websites (Mohammed, Garba & Umar, 2014; Ashcroft & Watts, 2005), which hindered users’ further use of the library website. It therefore becomes imperative that for the library to continue to play its role in providing relevant and accurate information to its patrons, it must employ the use of the web by deploying a usable library website.



## **Statement of the Problem**

Studies have shown that there is a decline in the use of library physical collections and services which may hamper the quality of teaching, learning, and research in academic institutions. Grimes and Boening (2001) posited that many library users bypass library resources and went directly to the Web for information. Similarly, Connell (2008) posited that many users visit a library's virtual website more often than they visit its physical location. It becomes imperative that for the library to continue to play its role in providing relevant and accurate information to its patrons, it must employ the use of the web by designing and deploying an effective library website. Poorly designed library websites will not improve the visibility of the library, neither will they promote what the library has to offer. Therefore, designing an effective library website that attracts as well as retains library users has become an important task for all academic libraries. It is against this background that the researchers carried out this study to assess the contents and services of library websites in Ibrahim Babangida Library, Modibbo Adama University, Yola.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to determine:

1. The types of information and e-resources available in Ibrahim Babangida library website.
2. The types of online services and web 2.0 services provided through the academic library website.

## **Literature Review**

Websites provide users with fast and easy access to resources and services of a library in an organized way. It has now become a vital source to fulfill the information needs of users at their desktops (Crowley, Leffel, Ramirez, Hart & Armstrong, 2002). With the help of library websites, library professionals are able to provide information to the library users in an efficient way. Important messages about computers, placement details, examination, seminars, and conference information, etc., can be provided to the users centrally through the library website. To make library use easier for the users, information literacy instruction can also be delivered through the library websites (Connell, 2008, p.121).

A good website filters and structures the information so that the user is not overwhelmed (Stover & Zink, 1996). Anyone who uses an academic library website for serious research could benefit substantially from its well-developed and organized information. Moreover, users accessing a well-arranged and logically structured library website with relevant links that work will be positively rewarded and stimulated in future use (Clausen, 1999). Supporting the good use of navigational tools, Farnum (2002) also asserts that the top navigation bar can be used for global navigation and includes links to resources that users would want to access from anywhere in the

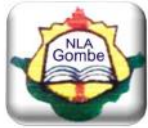


site while sidebars are often used for local navigation which shows the users what topics are nearby within a division of the site. In addition to navigational tools, an effective library website will have links to the library online catalogue where available, as well as an internal search engine. Internal search engine has been identified as another helpful navigational aid for library sites that present large amounts of information as it allows users to locate information at the sites quickly and easily. Placing a help webpage link in the upper right corner of every page will help users when they need help (Jasek, 2004). Therefore, an effective library website must use links to facilitate access to the library's holdings, including subscribed databases, institution-based licensed databases, course reserved and open access databases.

Gbaje & Kotso (2014) conducted a study on assessing the content of Nigeria Academic library websites where a population of 40 academic library websites in Nigeria with a sample of 37 was used. A checklist was used as the research instrument and the research was based on content analysis. The findings revealed that majority of the libraries did not use their websites to facilitate access to quality electronic resources as revealed in the data collected from the sampled academic library websites which showed that less than 41% of the sampled academic libraries provided links to open access resources (journals, books, databases) to their patrons and that access to institutional-based subscription databases for developing countries such as AGORA, JSTOR, and HINARI was also limited to 38% of the sampled academic library. It was also revealed that access to reference resources such as dictionary, encyclopedia, eIFI.net consortium electronic resources through the library websites was only facilitated by 14% and 5% respectively of the sampled academic libraries. This is a clear indication that most academic libraries do not use their websites to facilitate access to information about their holdings, policies, staff information, or services which invariably can result to low patronage of the library websites.

Speed is important since it enables users to attain their goals without too much wait. Dalleart & Kahn (1999) argued that consumers were able to separate the assessment of waiting experiences from the assessment of the website. However, they also showed that when there is uncertainty about the waiting (as with the majority of downloads), the negative feeling generated by the waiting experience carries over to the assessment of the website. They suggest that waiting for the homepage to download was less damaging to the website evaluation than having to wait during the interaction with the website. Their study revealed that delays shorter than expected led to better evaluations of the website.

In addition, Bucklin & Sismeiro (2003) suggest that there is a negative relationship between downloading time for a webpage and the probability of requesting an additional webpage within a website. Users feel anxious and lose satisfaction with the website if there is a prolonged delay to access online information (Tarafdar, 2005). Gbaje & Kotso (2014) also revealed in their study that

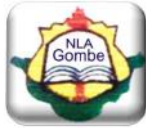


most academic library websites made it very difficult for users to locate information quickly and easily.

According to Rogers & Hugh (2009:201), user satisfaction involves users' attitude and perception with regards to how enjoyable it is to use the library website. Jeng (2005:101) adds that satisfaction is concerned with areas of ease of use, organization of information, clear labeling, visual appearance, contents, and error corrections, which are the various facets that users consider when determining the satisfactoriness of a digital library. Mohammed, Garba & Umar (2014) conducted a study on University Library Websites in Nigeria: An Analysis of Content in which 10 university library websites were used as the population and sample. Purposive sampling technique was used with a checklist as a research instrument. The study clearly revealed that the analysis of selected Nigerian university library websites' features and content in comparison with international trends clearly indicated that library website development in Nigerian university libraries was in its infancy, which implies most library websites in Nigeria had been experiencing difficulty providing users with their information needs as a result of lack of proper development and maintenance of the websites.

Osareh & Papi (2009) in their study titled, 'Evaluation of quality of academic library websites in Iran to offer suggestions to reform their quality,' showed that audience characteristics, the website goal, stability, and upload structure had good standings, ease of search, and graphic design, the scientific background of the writers were mediocre, and updating the contents and internal links had a low score. In general, the content and structure of library websites were not satisfactory. Kehinde & Tella (2012) conducted a study titled, 'Assessment of Nigerian University Library Websites/Web Pages' with a population of 110 university library websites, using a sample of 30 with a checklist as the research instrument and the study was based on a content analysis. The study showed that out of a total of 45 electronic resources integrated by the university libraries assessed, federal university libraries had the highest with 62%, private university libraries had 22%, state university libraries had 16%. The study further showed that out of a total of 43 web 2.0 tools integrated by the universities assessed, federal university libraries had the highest with 39%, state university libraries had 33% and private university libraries had 28%, which indicated that most of the Web 2.0 applications in these 30 university libraries were still in their basic developmental stage and most of the libraries only used one or two applications in their services. These Web 2.0 applications were not integrated into whole new platforms to create a user-friendly environment; also, electronic resources were still in their infant stages in most of the libraries assessed and the integration of the Nigerian Virtual library link was not encouraging.

Shukla & Tripathi (2010) conducted a study called, 'Establishing content awareness evaluation criteria for library websites: A case study of Indian academic library websites'. Their findings showed that the content awareness index (collection, services, facilities, management support, and



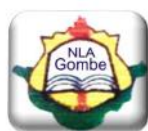
updated policies) indicated that the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the information available on the websites and the use of this index were a suitable means for evaluating the usefulness of the library contents. Also, the results showed that the websites of credible national Indian institutions had a higher content awareness index compared to the central libraries of other Indian universities. McGillis & Toms (2001) have assessed the usability of an academic library website using empirical research techniques and the study provided concrete evidence that categorization and labeling of the content had a huge impact on the usage of the website. Mohammad et al. (2014) on the basis of their findings of the previous studies showed that most libraries had a weak performance regarding the design and update of their websites. These websites especially had problems regarding updating their contents, ease of use, and in general, being user-friendly.

Findings by Liu & Shieh (2010) in their study, 'Usability evaluation study of the university library websites,' showed that one needs to pay attention to the ease of understanding, and flexibility while deploying university library websites to meet users' needs. Muhammad (2011) conducted a study titled 'Usability Evaluation of University of Management and Technology Library, Lahore website'. His findings showed that 33% of users faced problems locating information on the website while 47% were not faced with problems of locating required information on the library website.

In the findings of Vandecreek (2005), in an attempt to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the library websites of Northern Illinois University by using the trilateral approach of usability test and survey research, it was revealed that excessive use of library jargon and the absence of search feature, sitemap, and help feature in all webpages had hindered the usefulness of Northern Illinois University library websites. The study further revealed that most of the participants had not fully utilized the library websites because of lack of information literacy skills. Wickramanayake (2012) in a study titled, 'Instruction and help services in the academic library websites and Webpages in Sri Lanka: A content analysis,' showed that the quality of library websites and WebPages in Sri Lanka was based on various factors and that it is necessary to pay special attention to the content and method of access to the information. Also, findings by Vara & Parto (2010) in their study, 'Evaluation of academic library websites of the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology' showed that 59% of the library websites followed the criteria with regard to content.

## **Methodology**

Survey research design was adopted in conducting the research. Data collected were analyzed using content analysis. Data for content analysis was collected by visiting the library websites through the University Official website in the month of November, 2022. The content analysis of the library website was based on Qutab and Mahmood (2009) website content analysis and modified for the purpose of the study. The modified checklist includes 33 items divided into six



categories: Website aids and Navigation, Library contact Information, Library general information, Links to electronic resources, Library Online Services, and Library 2.0 services.

## Data Analysis

### Website aids and Navigation

The study sought to identify how the library uses website aids and navigation under the subheadings shown in table 1. The data collected revealed that the academic library website links were accessible from the University homepage, which is an indication of the value placed by the university on the library website in conformation with Bao (2000) assertion. The design of most academic library websites makes it very difficult for users to locate information at the sites quickly and easily as revealed in the data collected from the sampled academic library websites, which show that the sampled academic library websites do not provide access to their online catalogues and had navigational aids not readily available on each library web page respectively. Similarly, the sample academic library websites do not have a webpage for frequently asked questions (FAQs) and help page respectively. The implication is that most users will be unable to get immediate assistance or answers to meet their query.

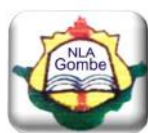
**Table 1: Website Aids and Navigation**

Variable	Available	Not Available
Link from university homepage to library homepage	√	
Navigation aid available on each webpage		√
Link from homepage to an online catalogue OPAC	√	
Search link found on library webpage		√
Help page available		√
General Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) exist		√

**Sources:** Field Survey, 2023

### Library Contact Information

This section includes specific items related to the library contact information such as phone number, e-mail address, online chat, physical address of the library, map showing the location of the library, and a virtual tour of the library. The data collected revealed that the sampled academic library does not provide a virtual tour of its library to its patrons. The sample academic libraries provide their phone numbers and e-mail, and online chat for contact by the patrons. This might be as a result of the perception that most of their patrons are domiciled on their campus and no consideration is given to visitors or prospective students.



**Table 2: Library Contact Information**

Variable	Available	Not Available
Phone number	√	
E-mail	√	
Online chat/IM services	√	
Physical address of Library		√
Map showing location of library		√
Virtual library tour		√

Sources: Field Survey, 2023

### Library General Information

The library mission and vision were provided by the academic library respectively. Library policies, as well as staff directory, list of newly acquired resources as well as library news were not provided in the academic library website. This is a clear indication that the library does not use the website to facilitate access to information about its holdings, policies, staff information or services, which invariably can result in low patronage of the library.

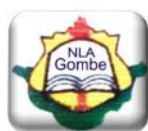
**Table 3: Library General Information**

Variable	Available	Not Available
Library mission and vision	√	
Staff directory		√
Library policies		√
List of newly acquired library resources		√
News and events		√
Opening hours	√	

Sources: Field Survey, 2023

### Links to Electronic Resources

This section was designed in order to identify the type of electronic resources the sampled academic libraries provide links to in their websites. Table 4 revealed that even though open access resources (journals, books, databases) and the NUC virtual library website are free for access and use, the library websites do not provide all of these links to their patrons. Access to institutional-based subscription databases for developing countries such as AGORA, JSTOR, and HINIARI was provided by the sampled academic library. Table 4 also shows that access to reference resources such as dictionary, encyclopedia, and eLFI.net consortium electronic resources through the library website is not fully facilitated by the library. This indicates that the libraries do not use their websites to facilitate access to all quality electronic resources.



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**Table 4: Links to Electronic Resources**

Variable	Available	Not Available
Open Access e-journals	√	
Open Access e-books	√	
Open Access databases		√
Institutional Repository		√
Nigeria Universities Commissions (NUC) virtual library		√
Access to consortium website eLFI.net		√
Subscription based e-journals	√	
Subscription based e-books	√	
Subscription based database	√	
Institutional bases subscription database (AGORA, HINIARI)	√	
Reference resources (dictionary, encyclopedias)		√

**Sources:** Field Survey, 2023

### **Library Online Services**

Data collected from the sampled library shows that there is very little provision for online services such as reference services, ask a librarian, reservation form, inter-library loan/document delivery request form, online tutorials, and course reserve. This result is not different from the result reported by Gbaje (2007).

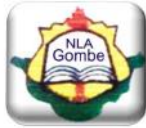
**Table 5: Library Online Services**

Variable	Available	Not Available
Reference Service		√
Reservation form		√
Ask a librarian		√
Reference Chat	√	
Online Tutorials		√
Inter-library loan/Document delivery request form		√
Course reserves		√

**Sources:** Field Survey, 2023

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Nigerian academic libraries have, over the past few years, made their presence on the web by deploying their websites. It was discovered that despite the university libraries having made their presence online through the library websites, the effectiveness of the university library websites was still a subject of concern in the university libraries under study. It was discovered that most of

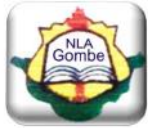


the library websites did not have adequate and accurate collections to meet users' information needs as indicated by the findings of the analysis. This finding corroborates those of Liu & Shieh (2010), which revealed that library websites are lagging behind in exploiting the full potential of the library portals and that libraries need to pay attention to the accuracy and completeness of content to effectively meet users' needs. The libraries use the websites to provide and facilitate access to various types of electronic resources. The use of library websites to provide general information and contact information on the library was not fully explored by the academic library websites. However, this study also revealed that Ibrahim Babangida Library does not use its website as a platform to provide its patrons with online services, as well as encouraging interactivities and collaboration between the library staff and their patrons. It is therefore pertinent that the library should study its website and redesign it to make it more functional, interactive, and effective by:

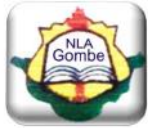
1. Using the library website to point their patrons to electronic resources and provide online services that will enable their patrons to use the library remotely.
2. Using the library website to provide information about the activities and contact information of the library should be provided on the library website to enable.
3. Incorporate and use web 2.0 services in library and information service delivery.

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