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Attitude of undergraduates towards educational usage of the Internet: A case of library schools in Delta and Edo States of Nigeria

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The aim of this study is to investigate the attitudes of undergraduates of library schools in Delta and Edo states towards educational usage of the internet. The instrument used in collecting data was the questionnaire. 238 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the sample size which consists of undergraduates of library and information science departments in Delta and Edo states. The questionnaire contained 8 items that have been structured to elicit information representing the undergraduates' attitude towards the educational usage of the internet since attitude are not directly observable, but can be inferred from responses given that show some state or disposition that has been engaged. The five items that met with the strongest agreement from the sampled undergraduates are 'the internet is as important as other research tools' (91. 6%), 'I find using the internet easier than using the library' (91.2%), 'Internet is a universal digital library' (90.8%), 'Internet can allow you to do more imaginative work' (88.2%), 'Internet has a potential to be an effective teaching/training tool' (87.8%). This finding revealed that undergraduates of library schools in Delta and Edo states have positive attitudes towards educational usage of the internet.

Key words: Attitude, internet, library schools, undergraduates.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet as a new invented technology, holds the greatest promise humanity has known for learning and universal access to quality education. The Internet is a network of hundreds of thousands of computers all over the world, connected in a way that lets others computer access information from them. The Internet is a computer mediated communication tool, providing the individual with access to a broad spectrum of information and unique communication technologies. It allows students to broaden their academic experience, access important information and communicate to others within academic community. Today, the internet comprises more than 45,000 regional, national and international networks, which connect more than 30million people in over 200 countries (Gray, 1999) The Internet is a valuable source of information used by students. It can be used as a supplement to traditional instructional methods. To complete a lecture, instructors may ask students to find specific web sites to gain more indepth knowledge about a particular topic. Internet resources provide the flexibility necessary to approach a concept from various perspectives.

The Internet is like the 'Knowledge' center of the world. We can find information on almost anything in a number

of languages quickly and efficiently. Students can connect and interact with lecturers quickly and cheaply. The Internet is great for learning in the form of e-learning and distance education. The use of the Internet provides great educational benefits to students. The Internet offers a host of ideas, a broad array of information and engageing, interactive opportunities to educators and students.

Internet use is spreading rapidly into educational pursuit of undergraduates with an impact in many areas. Students use the Internet to support the attainment of learning outcomes. Outside of school, students go online to complete teacher- directed research and interactive activities. Therefore, the positive attitude of under-graduates towards educational use of the internet will enable them see the internet as a functional tool, one that can greatly change the learning and research process.

There are number of main advantages of educational usage of the internet. They include:

Flexibility and variety

The flexibility of the internet is possibly the greatest advantage for online education. Websites, interactive activities, lecture notes, videoconferencing, chat rooms, and blogs, online education students and their educators can interact in ways that are already known to them. Internet provides user friendly interface

Ease and low cost of access

Internet has defeated the distance barrier for learning. Students need not to move to gain knowledge. It has become easy and affordable for everyone from a rural area student to a working professional. For the purpose of interactive courses and videoconferencing, rural students are facing problem and this still requires attention.

Ease and low cost of setting information online

Email, chat and interactive online meeting has become new way of learning. Information regarding a course is all available online. This is not only accessible but is affordable for institutes also. Records are available for 24X7 for any time use.

Ease of updating information

Online Information updating is easier than revising a textbook. Results can be displayed just after an exam. A new course is easy to add. New research or finding can become part of syllabus instantly.

Information resources

Information is probably the biggest advantage that internet offers. Internet is a virtual treasure trove of information. Any kind of information on any topic under the sun is available on the internet. The search engines like Google, Yahoo are at your service on the internet. Students are among the top users who surf the internet for research. Today, it is almost required that students should use the internet for research or the purpose of gathering resources.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Attitudes have been shown to be an important predictor of usage and implementation of technology (Rodgers and Chen, 2002). While attitudes are not directly observable, they can be inferred from responses given that show some state or disposition that has been engaged (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). The assumption by researchers is that attitudes are formed through a cognitive learning process where one gains information and then form beliefs. The information is gained through experiences with the object, such as the internet or a particular website (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). With the high usage of the internet, it can be assumed that undergraduate students have had many experiences on the internet and have formed attitudes towards its educational usage. As more and more undergraduate students and educators are envisioning the internet as a source for information to be used in the classroom, it is important that we monitor students' attitudes and usage to ensure curriculum is developed to meet the needs of this technology rich generation. Today, the internet comprises more than 45,000 regional, national and international networks, which connect more than 30million people in over 200 countries. The networks include organizations, schools, universities, companies, government, groups and individuals (Gray, 1999). Levin (2003) stated the internet as a new invented technology, holds the greater promise humanity has known for learning and universal access to quality education. It allows students to broaden their academic experience, access important information and communicate to others within academic community. An instructor may also ask students to search the internet for information on services offered in a particular location. In preparation for a class topic such as diversity, students may be asked to search the internet to learn about different ethnic groups or populations at risk. The internet may also be used to replace the traditional classroom lecture. A number of courses are being developed in which portions of the course or the entire courseware offered via the internet. The instructor may place course notes on web pages, may create a video recording of a live lecture for viewing on the internet, or use combina-

tions of these ideas. Forsyth (1998) discussed several methods of preparing courses for the internet including facilitating the use of video clips on web pages as well as the use of forms and other graphics on web pages.

The internet is now widely used as a medium of communication among researchers and students in higher institutions. For instance, Wilkinson et al. (2003) reported that most of the links between universities home pages were associated with information on research or education. Hence, education today no longer begins and ends within the four walls of schools and universities. In the same vein, Chavez (1997) opined that internet and computer usage has impacted positively on critical thinking, problem solving, prompt feedback and net-working. The strength of internet lies on the unprecedented growth of its network world wide and its ability to connect computers and several individuals without the barrier of geographical space. The use of the internet in education allows a wide range of international resources to be accessed. Resources can be very well organized on the internet, which allow for easy information access and exchange (Hicks, 2002). Through the internet, many different activities can be assigned to the students, which will enhance their education (Hicks, 2002). One of the most basic uses of the internet by students is to search for sources and information to complete course assignments. The internet's ability to provide students quick access to government documents, scholarly listservs, and databases located at geographically-removed institutions makes it a valuable information source for students (Benson, 1994; Browne et al., 2000; Lubans, 1998; Ryan, 1994). Anything from having discussions with foreign students to research about the universe is possible. Hicks (2002) conclude that the internet is a double-edged sword, as students can access any educational data-base, learn about any country, they can also be subjected to perverse and deviant topics. Faculty can use the internet infrastructure to improve and supplement traditional courses and degree programs. Library holdings can be digitized and made available both on and off campus. Guernsey (2002) noted that universities in New York routinely provide internet connections in residents' rooms, a circumstance that brings together the most powerful predictors of greater use, access, and education.

Mathew and Schrum (2003), in a random survey of 364 students in an Australia university on internet use, revealed that students use the internet for communi-cating with the professors through emails by asking for clarification or reporting information, e-mailing papers, and getting feedback. Secondly, they use the internet to get materials (web links, notes, practice, quizzes, hints for test etc.) from professional websites, checked grades, and accessed resources from WebCT. A survey of a large Australian university by Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) (2001) revealed that 88%

students used Internet for course related research. In a related survey, NCES (2001) in the U.S. found that 715 of online students said they relied mostly on internet sources for the last big project they did for school and 345 of online young people aged 12-17 downloaded study aides from the internet (Lenhart et al., 2001). Mashra and Bisht (2005) conducted a study on internet utilization pattern of undergraduate students in College of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar. The findings showed that 61.5 respondents of the males and 51.6 of the females used the internet for the purpose of preparing assignments. Papastergious and Solomonidou (2005) in a study conducted among high school students in Greece to find out the gender issue on use of the internet and favourite activities. They reveal that of the majority of the students, 73 out of 124 students (58%) searched the web for information about school courses, while fewer of them engaged in communication activities via chart, e-mail or video conferencing and in web page creation. Krant et al. (1998) and Scherer (1997) show that electronic mail and World Wide Web browsing were the most often used internet applications.

Ebersole (2000) in his study reported that respondents to the internet usage among undergraduate students gave the following reasons for using the internet:

1. Research and learning (52%)
2. Communicate with other people (7%)
3. Access to material otherwise unavailable (5%)
4. Find something existing/ fun (8%)
5. Finding something to do when bored (5%)
6. Sports and game information (1%)

Considering the use of internet for learning in the UK, the internet is overwhelmingly used in ways that relate directly, or indirectly, to learning. Some 90% of those who use the internet daily or weekly do so to do schoolwork and 94% use it as a research tool for obtaining academic information (Livingstone and Bober, 2006.) In Canada teenagers are reported to spend 2.4 h per week of their time online on activities explicitly related to learning, such as researching information from school projects. Levin and Arafeh (2002) conducted interviews with American teenagers and found that the internet was used for a wide range of education-related purposes, from research to corresponding with teachers and classmates about school projects. In another study based on review of literature by Kumar and Kaur (2006), it was revealed that students are the most frequent users of the internet. They used the internet mainly for educational purposes rather than for entertainment. Bavakutty and Salih (1999) conducted a study among undergraduate students at Calicut University. Their results showed that students, research scholars, and teachers used the internet for the purpose of study, research, and teaching, respectively.

A number of universities in Nigeria are now making

frantic efforts to improve on their ICT infrastructure; the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) became a leader among the universities in establishing internet and computing infrastructure through assistance from foreign agencies. OAU began with the establishment of a campus wide-area wireless network funded by the World Bank through the international centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) based in Trieste Italy. The network is tagged OAUNet (INTECU, 2006). Now, the academic subnet of OAUNet currently connects 2 colleges and thirteen faculties equipped with a 20km of 2 Gigabit fibre and connects to the internet on a bandwidth of 6Mbps/1.5Mbps bandwidth (INTECU, 2006). In addition to this, OAU also have in her premise eight cyber cafes namely; Eldorado, Infinite grace, Awo internet café, Rotunda, Conference centre, Firstnet, Cyber haven, UNIFECS with VSAT installation of varied capacities. All these are to promote students' educational use of the internet. Goldman et al. (1999) has argued that computer usage has numerous benefits as it primarily assists students' learning. Chavez (1997) argued that internet and computer usage can also impact positively on critical thinking, problem solving, prompt feedback and collaborative instruction. Therefore, online learning, using ICT and e-learning, have become the norm across tertiary educational institutions where students have been identified as stakeholders in the development and implementation of e-online learning.

Aim

This study is set out to determine the attitude of undergraduate students towards the educational use of the internet.

METHODOLOGY

The research instrument in this study was a questionnaire. It was administered to a sample size of two hundred and thirty-eight (238) undergraduate in Library Schools in Delta and Edo States.

The questionnaire contained 7 items which investigated students' attitudes towards educational uses of the internet. All the items were in Likert-format, with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This research work employed statistical tools such as frequency and percentage.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that 64.7% of the respondents are female while 35.3% are male. This shows that there are more female respondents than male.

Table 2 shows that a majority 144 (60.5%) of the respondents are from Delta State University, Abraka. While 94 (39.5%) of the respondents are from Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma.

A cursory look at Table 3 with a statistic mean of 2.86

Table 1. Gender distribution of respondents.

	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
	Male	84	35.3
Valid	Female	154	64.7
	Total	238	100.0

Table 2. Institutional data.

	Institution	Frequency	Percentage
	AAU, Ekpoma	94	39.5
Valid	DELSU, Abraka	144	60.5
	Total	238	100.0

reveals that Undergraduates of Library Schools in Delta and Edo states had positive attitude towards learning using the internet. This is because the statistic means is above the acceptance point of 2.00.

Table 3 shows majority of respondents (more than 50%) 'agree' or 'strongly agree' on the following statements: 'The internet is as important as other research tools' (91. 6%), 'I find using the internet easier than using the library' (91.2%), 'Internet is a universal digital library' (90.8%), 'Internet can allow you to do more imaginative work' (88.2%), 'Internet has a potential to be an effective teaching/training tool' (87.8%). From the findings, it can be deduced that undergraduates of library schools in Delta and Edo States have positive attitude towards learning using the internet. This finding corroborates Salih (2003) findings which stated that "students have positive attitude towards learning using the internet." The internet is as important as other research tools' (91. 6%), also ranked high among the top three items of Salih's findings on undergraduate students attitude towards educational usage of the internet. In this study, 91.6% of the respondents ranked this item first, likewise being ranked first with 68% of 207 students in Salih's findings. This consistency is very interesting. It should also be noted that the top three items in this research was also ranked in Salih's top five items.

Conclusion

The internet provides a wealth of information on any subject field. Students are using the internet increasingly and it occupies an important place among various information sources. In this study, the attitude of undergraduates of library schools in Delta and Edo States were examined. It can be concluded that majority of the undergraduates have positive attitudes towards the educational usage of the internet. Great percentages of the undergraduates are conscious of the internet being

Table 3. Attitude of the undergraduates toward educational use of the Internet.

Attitude of undergraduates towards educational use of the internet.	Responses								Statistic mean
	Agree		Disagree		Undecided		Total		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Internet is a universal digital library.	216	90.8	18	7.6	3	1.3	237	99.6	
It is enjoyable to chat on the internet.	199	83.6	30	12.6	8	3.4	237	99.6	
Internet has a potential to be an effective teaching/training tool	209	87.8	20	8.4	6	2.5	235	98.7	
I find using the internet easier than using the library.	217	91.2	16	6.7	4	1.7	237	99.6	2.86
Using the internet makes learning fun	198	83.2	27	11.3	9	3.8	234	98.3	
The internet is as important as other research tools	218	91.6	12	5.0	6	2.5	236	99.2	
Internet is a fastest way to reach knowledge.	197	82.8	28	11.8	8	3.4	233	97.9	
Internet can allow you to do more imaginative work.	210	88.2	21	8.8	5	2.1	236	99.2	

as important as other research tools. They also agreed that they find using the internet easier than the library. The positive attitude of the undergraduates towards educational usage of the internet, shows that the internet is widely used by the undergraduates for their educational and research purposes and as well, play an active role in searching for information. These findings are in line with the literature reviewed which established that "the educational usage of the internet worldwide shows that students have positive attitude towards this new educational and instructional technology."

The results of this study suggest that undergraduates of library schools in Delta and Edo states have positive attitude towards educational usage of the internet. Perhaps, more research on students' attitude towards educational usage of the internet should be done in order to eliminate negative perceptions on their attitude towards the usage of the internet.

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