



## THE MODERN INFORMATION RETRIEVAL MEDIA AND THE CHALLENGES FOR NIGERIAN LIBRARIES

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### Abstract

**T**he medium for retrieving information in changing fast. First from the manual method, then electronically. Retrieval is now made from full-text and on-line database. This paper discusses the transition to these now

*information retrieval media and the challenges for Nigerian libraries to adopt the two key elements that propel it-computers and*

### KEYWORDS:

*Retrieval, Media,  
Modern,  
Challenges,  
Libraries.*

*telecommunication facilities.*

### Introduction

**S**tudies in economic research have shown that there is a direct relationship between the economic development of a country and its telephone density (Morant, 1985). Future directions will however reveal a more distinct relationship between economic development and internet connectivity on one hand, and the ability to harness the vast research potentials of the internet on the other hand. Internet is only one, if not the most of the newer information retrieval media. The printed format which is today's popular medium for storing and retrieving information would be in for a stiff challenge in this country when further potentials of the internet start unfolding. The cynosure of all eyes would be diverted to the electronic retrieval medium and the era of the library without books would begin. This is true for developed countries of the world but the developing countries are still grappling

with the tradition printed format even into the next millennium. This study presents the inhibitions that hinder Nigerian libraries from gaining access to the enormous research potentials of the new information retrieval media, most especially the internet

#### THE MODERN INFORMATION RETRIEVAL TOOLS

Today, information storage and retrieval have gone beyond bibliographical databases. We can now store a body of text which can be searched in response to specific innovations. The new information retrieval media that have and would continue to shape retrieval methods are the full-text database, (electronic book/journal and CD ROM) and On-line databases (internet).

The full-text databases mainly, the electronic book/journal and the compact Disk Read only memory (CD-ROM) or its possible successor, Digital Video Disk (DVD ROM), are fast replacing the book as a medium of communicating information. The CD-ROM has been found useful in strong information that does not change over a substantial period of time. Data bases on CD-ROM are durable, have huge storage capacity and retrieval is easy, browsable and fast. There is a soft ware that helps to access information and presents it to users in a human readable form. The data base and the access software could exist on the same CD-ROM. The power, user friendly search software has the potential for complex searches. One other dimension that has created a distinctive role for CD-ROM.is the addition of movies and music to encyclopedia which cannot be achieved with books. Heppting (1994) reported that more than 90% of the libraries have CD-ROM players and that reference and children's titles are the best selling. The CD-ROM technology is just gaining acceptance among researchers in Nigeria and new millennium offers a promising prospect of increased usage.

The newer on-line information retrieval medium that would be the central focus of information specialist in the next millennium is the internet. The internet is an international network of thousands of computers networks. It is a cooperative network that links governments, school, libraries, corporations and researchers to each other and vast information resources. Some parts of the internet are designed for specialist audiences while the other parts are for the general audience. A researcher who has a computer with modem and telephone line can access the internet through the internet service providers. The service

provides themselves link the outside world through gateways located mostly in Europe and America. The electronic mail is the most widely used of the internet facilities. It is providing timely, convenient and inexpensive access to research colleagues all over the world. Since the internet beginning as an academic gateway in the 1980s, researchers have constituted the largest group of users. Ojo – Igbinoba (1997) also stated this when he said that 48% of internet users are in the research sector. The rest are spread between government (7%) education (6%) defence and others in the commercial sector (29%) the research dominance would even be greater when many publishing companies start developing their websites and when more African researchers start linking the internet to augment the present paucity of resources in African libraries.

### **THE CHALLENGES FOR NIGERIAN LIBRARIES**

Information processing storage and retrieval entail a convergence of three technologies computers, office machine and telecommunications. It is in connection with these three technologies that the challenges and ability of Nigerian libraries and researchers to reap from the enormous advantages of these new media shall be discussed.

The World Bank/NUC credit facility agreement spurred the automation process in most university libraries as micro-computer and a 4 LAN version of TINLIB were given to all federal government owned universities.

Beyond the issue of availability of computers, the ability of Nigerian libraries to link the information super-highway may be hinged on the telecommunications infrastructure that exists in the country. The necessary infrastructure services are not available and computers are still considered as luxury items in libraries. The telephone system is one of the most serious obstacles inhibiting the realization of internet dream in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. The telecommunications problem in Africa is best captured by the report of ITU's world telecommunications development. In 1994, it reported that the average "teledensity" (number of telephone main lines per 100 inhabitants) in Africa was only 1.6 compare to 45 in Europe. The average teledensity outside large cities in Africa was 1.2 and even lower in sub-saharan Africa (excluding South Africa). It was reported, that there are more telephone lines in New York,

or Tokyo than in the whole of Africa. Specifically, it was reported in the Nigerian philatelist that in 1993, Nigeria had only 644, 750 main lines. Addison (1998) also confirmed the inadequacy of telephone lines when he said that Nigeria has less than one million lines. And this is serving over 120 million people (0.84%). At a higher level, perhaps the greatest inhibitor will be the unavailability of an internet gateway. Aboyade (1996) pointed out that these few networking arrangements are backed by different donor agencies that hold fast to their programmes with no coordination in linking the continent directly to the internet gateway.

### **CONCLUSION**

The new information retrieval media, mainly like CD-ROM and the internet application may be the beginning of the advent of the library without books. Libraries in the developed countries are already making adequate use of these for research. But Nigerian libraries have a lot of hurdles to clear before they can benefit from these media.

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