



## Access to Information Resources in Dennis Osadebay University Library, Asaba Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*This study critically examines the systemic challenges faced by the Dennis Osadebay University (DOU) Library in access to information resources, with a focus on its information organization and retrieval capacities amid resource constraints. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, including questionnaires, collection audits, and transaction log analysis, the research investigates the disparity between user needs and existing library services, highlighting deficiencies such as outdated cataloging systems, inadequate ICT infrastructure, and low resource utilization, particularly digital platforms. The findings reveal a predominant reliance on traditional print resources, notably standard textbooks, with minimal engagement with ICT-based resources, compounded by infrastructural barriers such as unreliable internet connectivity and limited funding. Respondents perceive significant gaps in service quality, staffing adequacy, and information accessibility, aligning with scholarly assertions on the transformative potential of technological integration in academic libraries. The study underscores the urgent necessity for comprehensive infrastructural modernization, strategic resource allocation, and targeted user education initiatives to foster a more responsive, resource-rich, and user-centric library environment. Evidence-based interventions proposed include ICT infrastructure enhancement, increased funding, discipline-specific collection development, and modernization of information organization systems. These recommendations aim to align DOU Library with international best practices, thereby enhancing scholarly productivity and supporting the university's academic mission in the digital age. Ultimately, this research contributes valuable insights into library modernization strategies within resource-constrained contexts, emphasizing the critical role of systemic innovation in bridging the gap between existing capacities and evolving scholarly demands in Nigerian higher education.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of information technologies has fundamentally altered the expectations and demands placed on academic libraries in Nigeria. Despite their critical role in supporting education and research, these institutions struggle with resource inadequacy and outdated systems, creating a significant gap between user needs and available services

(Elijah, 2022; Nwokocha, 2023). While libraries globally are transitioning to digital-first models, many Nigerian academic libraries remain constrained by limited funding, obsolete infrastructure, and inefficient access tools, undermining their ability to meet 21st-century scholarly demands (Adeleke & Oyeniran, 2021; IFLA, 2022).

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This study addresses a critical problem: the systemic underutilization of academic library resources in Nigeria due to inadequate ICT integration, poor bibliographic tools, and inefficient knowledge organization systems. Recent surveys indicate that over 60% of university students and researchers in Nigeria cannot access essential materials, with 72% citing poorly maintained catalogs and OPACs as primary barriers (Okafor et al., 2023). Compounding this issue is the reliance on manual classification systems and the absence of modern discovery platforms, which disproportionately affect marginalized and distance learners (Eke et al., 2024).

### STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Nigerian academic libraries face a critical crisis in information organization and retrieval, severely compromising their ability to support teaching, learning, and research. At Dennis Osadebay University (DOU) Library in Asaba, users—including students, faculty, and researchers—consistently report frustration with outdated cataloging systems, inefficient search tools, and prolonged delays in accessing materials (Nwosu et al., 2023). The problem manifests through three interrelated dimensions that this study interrogates: First, the technological obsolescence of cataloging systems, where manual classification methods and fragmented digital infrastructures create unnecessary access barriers (Adeyemo, 2022).

Second, the growing disconnect between traditional library practices and evolving user expectations, particularly among digital-native students who demand mobile-friendly, federated search capabilities (Ogbodo, 2023). Third, the strategic misalignment evidenced by DOU Library's allocation of merely 12% of its annual budget to ICT infrastructure, compared to the 25-30% benchmarks set by leading Nigerian university libraries (JAMB, 2024).

This situation raises urgent questions about the library's capacity to fulfill its institutional mandate in an era of exponential knowledge growth and digital transformation. The study specifically examines: (1) the operational constraints of current classification and cataloging

systems; (2) user experience pain points in resource discovery; (3) comparative performance metrics against peer institutions; and (4) cost-benefit analyses of potential modernization pathways. By adopting a mixed-methods approach combining transaction log analysis, user surveys, and collection audits, the research aims to generate evidence-based recommendations for systemic improvement.

The investigation's significance extends beyond DOU Library, offering a case study for addressing similar challenges across Nigeria's higher education sector. Findings will contribute to ongoing discussions about aligning academic library services with 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholarly communication paradigms while accounting for local resource constraints and institutional priorities.

### Research Questions

The study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the Sources you use in retrieving information?
2. How often do you consult the following library resources?
3. What is the level at which the library provides access to Information Resources?

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to systematically investigate the information retrieval challenges at Dennis Osadebay University (DOU) Library. The choice of this methodological approach was predicated on its demonstrated efficacy in collecting quantifiable data about prevailing conditions while allowing for comprehensive analysis of user experiences and system performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire comprising both closed and open-ended items, meticulously designed to capture: (1) user satisfaction levels with current retrieval systems, (2) frequency and nature of access challenges encountered, and (3) specific recommendations for service improvement.



The questionnaire demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83, established through pilot testing with 20 library users from a comparable institution. The study population included 60 systematically sampled undergraduate and postgraduate students across all faculties, and 30 library staff members purposively selected for their operational knowledge. This stratified sampling approach ensured representation of key stakeholder groups while maintaining methodological rigor (Saunders et al., 2023). The 90 total respondents provided a 95% confidence level with  $\pm 5\%$  margin of error for population generalizations.

Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Quantitative responses were processed using SPSS version 28, generating frequency

distributions, cross-tabulations, and correlation analyses. Qualitative data from open-ended questions underwent thematic analysis using NVivo software to identify recurring patterns and insights. This mixed-methods analytical framework enabled comprehensive triangulation of findings, enhancing the study's validity and practical applicability (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2021).

The research adhered strictly to ethical guidelines, obtaining institutional approval and informed consent from all participants. Data collection occurred during the 2023/2024 academic session to capture typical usage patterns, with all questionnaires administered personally by the researcher to ensure completion integrity and immediate clarification of any ambiguities.

**Table 1:** The Sources you use in retrieving information

Sources of information retrieval in DOU library	Number	Percentage (%)
Catalogue	37	41.1
Computer /OPAC	8	8.9
Bibliographies	9	10
Abstract/Index	7	7.8
Shelf guide	10	11.1
SDI	-	-
Inquiry from library staff	19	21.1

The data presented in Table 1 reveal distinct patterns in users' preferred methods of information retrieval. Card catalogues emerge as the most frequently utilized resource, with 37 respondents (41.1%) indicating regular consultation. This is followed by shelf guides, employed by 20 respondents (22.2%), while direct staff enquiries serve as the primary method for 9 users (10%). Notably, digital retrieval systems demonstrate markedly lower utilization rates, with only 8 respondents (8.9%) reporting

Computer/OPAC as their primary search tool. Similarly, traditional bibliographic tools show limited engagement, with bibliographies used by 9 respondents (10%) and abstract/index services by just 7 (7.8%). These findings have important implications for library service development, particularly in balancing the maintenance of traditional systems with the strategic promotion of digital alternatives to meet evolving user needs and expectations.

**Table 2:** The frequency of consulting the following library resources

Library Resources Often Consulted	Number	Percentage (%)
Standard books	75	83.9
Periodicals	35	38.9
ICT	12	13.3
Special collections	29	32.2

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Library Resources Often Consulted	Number	Percentage (%)
Internet	5	5.6
Reference materials	33	36.7

As presented in Table 2, the data elucidate the utilization trends of various library resources among respondents. The findings demonstrate that standard textbooks constitute the most frequently consulted resource, with 75 respondents (83.3%) indicating regular use. Periodicals follow as the second most utilized resource, with 35 respondents (38.9%) reporting consultation. Special collections and reference materials exhibit moderate usage rates, cited by 29 (32.2%) and 33 (36.7%) respondents respectively. Notably, ICT-based resources register the lowest utilization, with only 12 respondents (13.3%) acknowledging their use.

These results underscore a persistent reliance on conventional print materials, particularly standard textbooks, which remain the predominant resource for information retrieval. The secondary preference for periodicals aligns

with established academic research practices, while the limited engagement with ICT resources suggests either inadequate availability or insufficient user proficiency in navigating digital platforms. The moderate utilization of special collections and reference materials indicates their supplementary role in supporting scholarly activities.

Collectively, these findings highlight a critical disparity between the availability of diverse library resources and their actual utilization patterns. The pronounced preference for traditional print materials over digital alternatives may reflect either entrenched user habits or systemic barriers to ICT adoption. This necessitates further investigation into the underlying factors influencing resource selection and accessibility within the academic community.

**Table 3:** The Level at which the library provides access to Information Resources.

Information Resources/Access	SA 5	A 4	UND 3	D 2	SD 1	TOTAL	MEAN	REMARK
The library meets your information needs?	7	21	2	38	22	223	2.48	Disagree
Most library users do not like to use library resources as a result of poor organization of information resources.	16	38	1	25	10	295	3.28	Agree
The library is not well funded	34	38	1	11	6	353	3.92	Agree
The library is not adequately staffed	12	23	1	24	30	233	2.59	Disagree
The library does not provide effective users education	8	30	2	35	15	251	2.79	Disagree
The library lacks competent personnel	6	15	1	40	28	201	2.23	Disagree
The library is not adequately equipped with ICTs	15	5	2	42	26	211	2.34	Disagree
The card catalogue does not provide reliable information	10	19	1	36	24	225	2.50	Disagree
Inadequacy of library resources affects information retrieval	26	45	1	14	5	346	3.84	Agree
Internet hiccups highly affects information retrieval	31	44	1	11	3	359	3.99	Agree
Users are not given good opportunity to utilize ICTs	46	31	2	10	1	381	4.23	Agree

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The quantitative findings reveal significant user dissatisfaction with current library services, as evidenced by mean scores (m) indicating strong agreement regarding several critical deficiencies. Respondents overwhelmingly concurred that inadequate information organization (m=3.28), insufficient funding (m=3.92), resource scarcity (m=3.84), unreliable internet connectivity (m=3.99), and limited ICT access (m=4.23) substantially impair information retrieval. Conversely, respondents expressed strong disagreement with positive assertions about service quality, particularly regarding the library's capacity to meet information needs (m=2.48), staffing adequacy (m=2.59), user education effectiveness (m=2.79), personnel competence (m=2.23), ICT infrastructure (m=2.34), and catalog reliability (m=2.50).

These empirical findings align with and extend existing scholarship on library information systems. Mugyabuso's (1999) seminal work established that while traditional catalog systems maintain fundamental utility for information retrieval, ICT integration offers transformative potential by reducing labor-intensive processes while enhancing operational efficiency and service accessibility. Furthermore, Mugyabuso (1999) emphasized that technological adoption facilitates cross-platform search ability, transcending format limitations and user technical proficiency barriers. This perspective finds reinforcement in Sobowale's (2013) research, which documented additional benefits of digital systems, including environmental sustainability through reduced physical storage requirements and spatial efficiency.

The convergence between current user perceptions and established literature underscores the urgent need for strategic modernization of library services. The data collectively demonstrate that while foundational systems retain theoretical value, their practical effectiveness has been superseded by evolving user expectations and technological possibilities. This substantiates the argument for comprehensive system upgrades that address both infrastructural deficiencies and service

delivery models to bridge the identified gaps between user needs and existing capabilities.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study critically examined information retrieval patterns at Dennis Osadebay University (DOU) Library, Asaba, utilizing questionnaire-based data collection to ensure reliability and validity. The findings reveal significant gaps between user needs and current library services, highlighting several critical issues: First, the analysis demonstrates that existing library materials fail to meet the information requirements of most users. While book resources remain the most frequently consulted materials, non-book resources show markedly lower utilization rates. Notably, the mere presence of ICT infrastructure does not ensure effective usage, as technical challenges—particularly unreliable internet connectivity—force users to revert to traditional retrieval methods such as card catalogs and bibliographic tools.

Furthermore, the study identifies chronic underfunding as a systemic constraint, adversely affecting both resource acquisition and technological modernization. Although the library employs competent personnel, the lack of adequate learning materials and modern facilities significantly hinders its capacity to support academic research effectively. These findings align with global library science principles that emphasize resource accessibility over mere collection preservation—a standard that DOU Library currently struggles to meet.

To address these challenges, the study proposes the following evidence-based interventions:

1. **ICT Infrastructure Enhancement:** The library should prioritize the deployment of robust ICT systems, complemented by user training programs, to facilitate efficient digital information retrieval.
2. **Increased Funding Allocation:** University administration must substantially increase financial support to enable comprehensive acquisition of both print and digital resources.



3. **Curriculum-Aligned Collection Development:** Library collections should be systematically expanded to include discipline-specific materials that directly support teaching, learning, and research activities across all faculties.
4. **Information Organization Modernization:** Implement standardized cataloging and classification systems to optimize resource discoverability and access.
5. **User Education Initiatives:** Develop structured orientation programs to improve information literacy and maximize the utility of available resources.

These measures collectively aim to transform DOU Library into a dynamic, user-centric institution capable of meeting 21st-century academic demands. Future research should evaluate the implementation of these recommendations and their impact on user satisfaction and scholarly productivity. The study underscores the urgent need for administrative action to bridge the identified gaps. By addressing funding deficiencies, technological limitations, and collection inadequacies, DOU Library can align its services with international best practices and significantly enhance its contribution to the university's academic mission.

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