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Awareness and Utilization of the Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) by the Researchers at International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Library, Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the awareness and use of The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture Library, Ibadan, Nigeria. Data collection was by questionnaire, using random sampling techniques. A total of forty-two (84 per cent) out of fifty responses were returned and analysed. Researchers both within and outside users are aware of the availability of the TEEAL database in the IITA library. IITA scientists and research fellows are the major users of the TEEAL database. The study also revealed that most of the users relied on the staff assistance to search and retrieve information. The major challenges to the use of TEEAL database are users' lack of information literacy skills and high cost of printing. The study recommends that user should be trained to use the database themselves. The cost of printing should be subsidised. Improve on the sustainability of current information in the agricultural research institutes in Nigeria. Recommend users selfservice approach

Keywords - *Agriculture, Electronic Journals, Information utilization, Research libraries, Nigeria.*

Background to the Problem

The use of e - resources has changed paradigm in the librarianship profession. Resources are now available in both print and electronic formats. Electronic database on CDROM technology is not excluded. In the recent time, resources are made available first in electronic format before print version. This enhances learning, teaching and research. It also enables access and use simultaneously by users at any time at any location. This technology has made it possible to have access to current and international resources. This is of great advantage especially in the developing countries. Awareness, skills and ability to efficiently and effectively utilise such resources are paramount. Agricultural researchers like all other researchers should know electronic

resources available for research and acquire skills necessary to effectively utilize them. This responsibility lies on the resource centre of the research institution.

Research library is an important integral of any research institution. It is the heartbeat of any research institution. As such, outstanding research output would not be achieved without up to date resources and services of the library to back-up its research mandates. Libraries are required to acquire, organise, disseminate and conserve resources in the format most useful to best serve the clientele. This is why information professionals need to make print and electronic resources accessible and train the patrons on its use. Utilization of resources has greatly shifted from print to electronic resources.

The advent of information communication technology has made availability, awareness, accessibility and use of electronic resources success stories worldwide today. CD-ROM technology is part, Singh and Mehla (1995) revealed that the agricultural databases on CD ROM in developing countries should be considered due to its various advantages. It makes electronic resources especially in agriculture fields available to users. Users can self-search or get assistance to retrieve information for learning and research (Oduwole and Sowole 2006).

As users get more frequent use of electronic databases, more familiar, independent and effective they would become in term of self service. Electronic resources could be accessed remotely using IP authentication or username and password. Researchers could also receive electronic document delivery service where there is problem with access from remote locations. This service is rendered basically for research purposes. This ensures that copyright law is kept and it allows law of fair use. There is need for training and re-training programmes for researchers to create awareness, acquire the necessary skills to best utilise electronic resources available for research. This would make researchers to fully get acquainted with the essential skills needed to optimise electronic resources use.

Information Literacy training serves as an eye opener to several skills on awareness, effective access and ethical utilisation of electronic resources. Renwick (2005) carried out a study on knowledge and use of electronic information resources by medical sciences faculty at The University of the West Indies. Findings reviewed that the faculty had high awareness of electronic resources

made available by the MSL while low usage. On the contrary, Angello (2010) conducted a research on awareness and use of electronic information sources among livestock researchers in Tanzania. The results of the study revealed that almost all respondents have electronic information searching skills but there is low awareness of electronic resources availability. But researchers with information literacy skills were aware and used a wide range of the e-resources. Also, Harle and Wella (2010) conducted research on availability, access and use: re-understanding the e-journal problem and the findings revealed that researchers are often unaware of electronic resources available to them through their institution. Duvigneau, S. and Chimwaza, G. (2010) presented a collaborate work on developing training courses for information professionals and researchers to promote and improve their use of Research4Life products such as HINARI, AGORA and OARE. Its outcome revealed that building searching skills using learner-centred approaches in an African context had positive impact on researchers and their work.

Furthermore, literature has revealed usage, impact, problems and recommendations of CD ROM database in Nigerian universities (Oduwole 2000, Agboola 2001, Oduwole and Akpati 2003, Okpala and Igbeka 2005 and Oduwole and Sowole 2006) while very few are on agricultural research institutions in Africa (Gooch 1995, Angello 2010).

The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) is a digital library in a box project of Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York. It is a fulltext user friendly database of about 146 prominent agricultural journals from 1993 to 2009. Selection of journal in TEEAL were made by the international professionals in the field of agriculture. TEEAL is being funded by Rockefeller foundation. Ochs (2005) study revealed that TEEAL was meeting its objectives of improving the quality and effectiveness of agricultural research carried out mostly in institutions in the African developing countries. As such, improving, empowering and promoting the African agricultural sector economy in turn boost its livelihood. Also its capacity of high storage helps in conservation of space; this is supported by (Ezomo 1994). It was formally in CDs from 1-456 which covers 1993-2005, but in 2006 TEEAL fulltext database from 1993-2009 was made available in just one disc. Updates are made on yearly bases to keep the database relevant and current to researchers.

Furthermore, internet connectivity is not required to use TEEAL which makes it cost effective compared with online subscribed journals. Users can search, read and print from the database at the same time. This supports the findings of Oduwole and Sowole 2006 and Ye 1995 that revealed that TEEAL users are computer-literate and can rapidly and easily utilise the database.

International Institute of Tropical Agriculture is a non profit international agricultural research institution with headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria. IITA has other stations in the sub Sahara Africa. It is majorly supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). CGIAR is an association of about forty countries, international and regional organisation and private foundations. International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) was founded in 1967. IITA is governed by an international board of trustees. The staffs include about 110 scientists and professionals from about forty countries. They work at the selected locations in many countries of sub Saharan Africa.

The goal of IITA is to increase food crops productivity and to develop sustainable agricultural systems, thus helping especially to improve the nutritional value/status and wellbeing of low-income people.

IITA library services were established in 1969. The main purpose of IITA library was to meet the information needs of research scientists who are the primary users. Such services are also extended to research students, support staff, and researchers from Nigerian research institutions and universities. Hence charged with the responsibilities to select, acquire, subscribe, purchase, process, disseminate and conserve resources both in print and electronic and other formats needed for research for development. These resources are acquired through purchase, subscription and gifts.

Statement of Problem

Dwindling library funds which makes it difficult to subscribe to all needed online and print journal titles, space problems to manage them, IP problems and outstations in different locations in sub Saharan Africa affects research for development in one way or the other. Hence, the library purchased TEEAL to complement the resources available in the library. It has both the CD-ROM collection 1993 – 2005 as well as the latest version called LanTEEAL with 1993 to 2009 year of coverage. To this end, this paper intends to

study the awareness and utilization of TEEAL by researchers in an agricultural research based institute in Africa with her headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The Study Objectives

- To determine the level of awareness of TEEAL at IITA.
- To find out the categories of users.
- To ascertain the method of accessibility.
- To find out the relevance of TEEAL to research.
- To find out the challenges of effective utilization and ways of improving them.

Methodology

This study employed survey method to investigate the awareness and utilization of TEEAL among the clientele of the IITA library. A purposive sampling technique was adapted. A questionnaire was the main instrument used for gathering data for the study during the period of August to October 2011. The questionnaire sought information on bio-data, TEEAL awareness, usage, and information retrieval method. Suggestions were also sought on improving TEEAL usage in agricultural research institutes in Nigeria.

Fifty copies of the questionnaire were distributed with the assistance of library staff and forty-two (84%) were completed and returned. Data gathered were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and simple percentages.

Analysis of Results and Discussion

Out of the forty-two respondents, findings from the data collected show that 30 (71.4%) were male while 12 (28.6%) were female

Table I: Distribution of Respondents' Educational Qualification

Qualification	No. of Respondents	%
PhD	18	42.9
MSc.	15	35.7
BSc.	9	21.4
Total	42	100.0

From the Table I above, it reveals that the PhD holders used the TEEAL database mostly by 18 (42.9%). This shows that TEEAL usage is not limited to student researchers but heavily used by doctors in the field of agriculture.

Table II: Distribution of categories of The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) Users

Categories of Users	No. of Respondents	%
Scientists	14	33.33
Research Associate	3	7.14
Research Fellows	10	23.81
Support staff	3	7.14
External users:		
Lecturers	5	11.91
Postgraduates	7	16.67
Total	42	100.00

It can be seen from Table II that TEEAL users spread across different categories of people in the IITA community. Also, such service was extended to researchers from universities and research institutes in Nigeria.

Awareness of the respondents were sought on TEEAL and findings reveal very high percentage of awareness (39 92.86%) while only 3 (7.14%) were not. This shows that IITA researchers as well as external users were well informed of the availability of TEEAL in the Institute library.

Table III: Source of Awareness of The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL)

Sources of Awareness	No. of Respondents	%
Face to face/library staff	25	59.523
Email	2	4.762
Library webpage	0	0.000
Through colleagues	9	21.429
Others	3	7.143
No response	3	7.143
Total	42	100.000

The Table III above shows that highest respondents 25 (59.523%) were informed only during their visit to the library. Other means of awareness were less utilised. There is need to deploy web 2.0 tools as sources of awareness as well as information literacy programmes. This is because of the users who are based in other stations in the sub-Saharan Africa cannot be physically present at Ibadan, Nigeria every time. This will also save the time of both users and library staff for other important duties.

Table IV: Frequency of The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) Usage

Frequency of Usage	No. of Respondents	%
Daily	3	7.143
Twice a week	18	42.857
Once a week	4	9.524
Once a month	0	0.000
Occasionally	14	33.333
Never	3	7.143
Total	42	100.000

Table IV shows that the highest frequency of use was twice a week by 18 respondents while occasionally being used by 14 respondents. It was daily used by three (3) respondents, four (4) respondents a week and three (3) never used TEEAL. Awareness of the database made researchers to effectively utilise it.

Table V: Purpose of the Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) Usage

Purpose	No. of Respondents	%
Conduct research	30	71.43
Update	6	14.29
Presentation of seminar/term paper	3	7.14
Others	0	0.00
No response	3	7.14
Total	42	100.00

From Table V above, purpose of use was majorly for research. This is in agreement with Oduwole and Sowole, 2006 and Agboola, 2001. This could lead to collaboration and improvement in research for development in Africa and beyond.

Table VI: Method of Accessing the Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) Database

Search Method	No. of Respondents	%
Self search	11	26.19
Library Assistance	28	66.67
Menu help	0	0.00
No response	3	7.14
Total	42	100.00

Table VI reveals that the majority of the respondents rely on the assistance of the library staff while 11 respondents were capable of searching TEEAL database by themselves. Lack of searching skill especially the new version of TEEAL called LanTEEAL could be responsible. This is in consonance with Angello 2010 who opined that increase in the level of information literacy skills of agricultural researchers will impact them positively and enhance their awareness and use of e-resources. LanTEEAL does not require insertion of CDs before its full text papers could be accessed.

The analysis of data collected shows that boolean search 18 (42.86 per cent) was revealed mostly used method to retrieve information, followed by keywords 14 (33.33 per cent). This means that few researchers are acquainted with the skills required to search TEEAL database. Such skills are needed to be packaged for self use of the researchers in form of information literacy training.

The findings from the analysis of data collected show that 33 respondents (78.57 per cent) were satisfied with the use of TEEAL while 6 (14.29%) respondents were not. This shows that TEEAL is well utilised and it will continue to gain more ground in the agricultural research institutions in the developing countries. This is in agreement with (Oduwole and Sowole 2006), whose study revealed that 88.5% respondents were satisfied with the information obtained from TEEAL.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study showed that researchers were aware of the availability of the TEEAL database in the IITA library. Purpose of use was majorly for research which could positively improve the quality output of research, food security, elevate poverty, and better human livelihood. There was regular power supply and good equipment in place which is contrary to findings of Oduwole and Sowole (2006). With the response of the researchers, the major challenge to the use of TEEAL database is inadequate skills of searching as well as cost of printing. On this note, information literacy skills should be introduced and regular orientation on electronic databases searching should be given utmost priority. Also, from the source of production, all journal titles already in the CDs should not be removed from newer version which may discourage usage. Especially libraries that do not have the CDs or print versions would not be able to meet the needs of the users in such subject areas.

Other recommendations made are:

IITA management should increase the funding of its library to better strengthen the tie of research for development.

The library should train its users and create more awareness through web 2.0 tools on use of electronic resources.

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