

**AWARENESS AND UTILISATION OF ELECTRONIC DATABASES BY
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS FOR IMPROVED ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION, OKENE, NIGERIA**

¹Prisca Oluchi CHUKS-IBE (PhD), ²Oluwatosin Daniel AKOBE

**¹Department of Library and Information Science, Federal University of Technology,
Minna**

²E-Librarian/Lecturer, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa

Abstract

This study examined the awareness and utilisation of electronic databases among undergraduate students for improved academic performance in the Federal College of Education, Okene, Nigeria. The study was necessitated by the growing importance of electronic information resources in academic libraries and the need for students to effectively utilise subscribed databases for learning, research, and academic development. The study also examined among other objectives: awareness of undergraduate students of the availability of electronic databases; frequency of use of electronic databases; challenges in the use of electronic databases; strategies to promote the awareness and utilisation of e-databases. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised undergraduate students of the Federal College of Education, Okene, from which a sample of 200 respondents was selected using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores with a decision benchmark of 2.50. The findings revealed that students were aware of several electronic databases such as Academic Search, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Nexis Uni, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, and PubMed/Medline, although the level of awareness differed across the databases. The study also revealed a moderate frequency of electronic database usage among students, with certain resources experiencing underutilisation. Major challenges identified included lack of awareness, inadequate access to computers, poor internet connectivity, insufficient information retrieval skills, inadequate training, and limited digital facilities. Furthermore, the study revealed that strategies such as library orientation programmes, user education, marketing of electronic resources, improved internet services, provision of digital facilities, and regular training for both students and library staff would enhance awareness and utilisation of electronic databases. The study concluded that increased awareness, improved infrastructure, and continuous information literacy training are essential for enhancing students' academic performance through effective use of electronic databases.

Keywords: Awareness, Electronic databases, Utilisation, Academic performance, Undergraduate students, Academic libraries.

Introduction

Globalisation through modern information and communication technology (ICT) is revolutionising teaching and research in higher institutions all over the world, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. One significant impact of globalisation, information and communication technology on teaching and research in developing countries is access to global information resources by researchers and undergraduate students. One of the developments of these technologies is Electronic databases which play significant roles as information sources in today's libraries. Electronic-Databases (e-databases) have become an established component of many academic libraries' collection. These databases often contain journal articles, or references to such articles, e-books, reference sources, conference papers and reports among others. There are various types of these databases such as bibliographic, full-text, directory, numeric and multimedia.

Many users can access e-databases simultaneously from anywhere. It is therefore convenient to use. College libraries, therefore, spend large amounts of money on these resources to satisfy the teaching, learning and research needs of its faculty and students (Ojo and Akande, 2015). As colleges spend a substantial amount of money on the subscription of these databases, it is only appropriate and economical that these databases are optimally utilized to contribute to the academic achievement of students and also to get value for money.

In spite of the value of e-databases and ensuring that they are available for use by library clients, studies have shown that usage is not up to the level expected or is simply underutilized. Reasons most often advanced for not using the databases include lack of awareness, preference for other sources like general search engines such as Google, lack of search skill, lack of adequate ICT infrastructure, bad downloading time, and at times sheer attitude of users. The manifestation of these reasons may differ from place to place or from situation to situation.

According to Uzuegbu, Chukwu and Ibegwam (2014) electronic databases as specialized records of related published information documents which are not available on Google or other common search engines, especially in a full text. Furthermore, Ani and Ahiauzu (2015) stated that “electronic databases are collection of electronic information sources (e-journals or ebooks) by publishers from various fields or disciplines and that some of these databases are provided free

of charge to libraries in developing countries by their publishers or vendors, while others require some fees for subscription”

Electronic databases are now very popular among librarians and library users because of several factors like; speed, flexibility, wide range and the currency BIAD in Ani and Ahiauzu (2015). Online databases or web-based databases are widely available to library patrons in the entire world, and many patrons can tap into these databases from their computers or electronic devices anywhere in the world. The Internet, through electronic databases or digital libraries, has become an important source of academic information for tertiary students (Rose and Takayama, 2016).

A large, regularly updated file of digitized information (bibliographic records, abstracts, full-text documents, directory entries, images, statistics, etc.) related to a specific subject or field, consisting of records of uniform format organized for ease and speed of search and retrieval and managed with the aid of database management system (DBMS) software. Content is created by the database producer (i.e. Thomson Reuters), which usually publishes a print version (Biological Abstracts) and leases the content to one or more database vendors (EBSCO, OVID, etc.) that provide electronic access to the data after it has been converted to machine-readable form (BIOSIS), usually on CD-ROM or online via the Internet, using proprietary search software.

An electronic database in which the content is revised and/or augmented, usually on a regular basis, to provide current information or to add recently published sources and also designs to provide information about a very specific topic, as opposed to a range of topics, usually for a limited audience. Most journal databases are updated on a regular basis as new issues are published and indexed. Most databases used in libraries are catalogs, periodical indexes, abstracting services, and full-text reference resources leased annually under licensing agreements that limit access to registered borrowers and library staff (ODLIS). There are many, many different types of electronic databases in the world today, including statistical databases, image databases, and others. These databases are becoming very important these days as they are more up-to-date, and can be accessed anywhere, crossing all geographical boundaries. Such electronic databases are very valuable and useful for time-saving while conducting R&D activities.

Akpojotor (2016) averred that awareness and use of e-database are very crucial so as to keep undergraduate students alert of the available media through which they can access needed

information. In addition, Prangya and Rabindra (2013) reiterated that awareness is core to the usage of e-database; where materials are in closed access, users' ease of access to such e-resources is by far reduced, but where they are in open access (not subscription-based), undergraduate students find and use them. Obuh (2015) believed that awareness of e-database has been a major concern for academia, undergraduate students and researchers in recent days.

Most College libraries provide e-databases to their users to support teaching, research and development. The literature shows that e-databases with their retrieval from network capabilities, have been gradually replacing some of their printed counterparts. In order to utilize the growing range of e- databases. Students and research scholars must acquire and practice the skills necessary to exploit them. "For students using a variety of on-line databases, it is as though they were parking lot attendants, where every vehicle is not only a different make and model but has a different configuration" (Blandy and Libutti, 2013). Students are increasingly expected to use e-database whilst at the college; to make use of the growing range of electronic resources, students must acquire and practice the skills necessary to exploit them (Okello-Obura and Magara 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Electronic databases (e-database) in the libraries have made information available to scholars and undergraduate students for study or research purposes. Electronic databases are used in the library by lecturers and students to provide access to enormous academic information which is very crucial to their overall academic performance and their productivity. Those who have the awareness of its availability, access, skill, and the necessary infrastructural devices to assess information through them are continuously assessing extraordinarily esteemed resources at much greater speed, depth and quantity. Those that are not aware of the existence of these facilities and resources, are being relegated and fall short of human potentials.

Nevertheless, it is one thing for an academic library to acquire and automate its services, it is another for the users to be sufficiently well-informed of the existence of these electronic databases, have easy access to them and make effective use of them so as to retrieve information. The absence of such awareness, availability, access and proper utilization of electronic databases in this information age may very well result in intellectual and possibly economic poverty. Thus, the study aims to determine the level of awareness and use of electronic databases among

undergraduate students for improved academic performance at the Federal College of Education, Okene.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the level of awareness and use of electronic databases by undergraduate students for improved academic performance in Federal College of Education, Okene. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Ascertain the level of awareness of undergraduate students of the availability of electronic databases for improved academic performance in Federal College of Education, Okene.
2. Determine the frequency of use of electronic databases by undergraduate students for improved academic performance in Federal College of Education, Okene.
3. Identify challenges in the use of electronic databases in Federal College of Education, Okene.
4. Ascertain strategies to promote the awareness and utilisation of e-databases by undergraduate students for improved academic performance.

Literature Review

Electronic-Databases (e-databases) have become an established component of many academic libraries' collection. These databases often contain journal articles, or references to such articles, e-books, reference sources, conference papers and reports among others. There are various types of these databases such as bibliographic, full-text, directory, numeric and multimedia.

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In spite of the value of e-databases and ensuring that it is available for use by library clients, studies have shown that usage is not up to level expected or is simply underutilized. Reasons most often advanced for not using the databases include lack of awareness, preference for other

sources like general search engines such as Google, lack of search skill, lack of adequate ICT infrastructure, bad downloading time, and at times sheer attitude of users. The manifestation of these reasons may differ from place to place or from situation to situation. Dukic and Ahmed, (2016), for example, indicated that usage of e-databases in developed countries is more than in developing countries basically because of poor ICT infrastructure and huge cost of such resources. Anaraki and Babalhavaeji (2015) also pointed out that where students are not aware of existence of e-databases they tend to use general search engines to meet their information needs. An electronic database in which the content is revised and/or augmented, usually on a regular basis, to provide current information or to add recently published sources and also designs to provide information about a very specific topic, as opposed to a range of topics, usually for a limited audience. Most journal databases are updated on a regular basis as new issues are published and indexed. Most databases used in libraries are catalogs, periodical indexes, abstracting services, and full-text reference resources leased annually under licensing agreements that limit access to registered borrowers and library staff (ODLIS). There are many, many different types of electronic databases in the world today, including statistical databases, image databases, and others. These databases are becoming very important these days as they are more up-to-date, and can be accessed anywhere, crossing all geographical boundaries. Such electronic databases are very valuable and useful for time-saving while conducting research and development activities.

Akpojotor (2016) averred that awareness and use of e-database are very crucial so as to keep undergraduate students alert of the available media through which they can access needed information. In addition, Prangya and Rabindra (2013) reiterated that awareness is core to the usage of e-database; where materials are in closed access, users' ease of access to such e-resources is by far reduced, but where they are in open access (not subscription-based), undergraduate students find and use them. Obuh (2015) believed that awareness of e-database has been a major concern for academia, undergraduate students and researchers in recent days. Most College libraries provide e-databases to their users to support teaching, research and development. The literature shows that e-databases with their retrieval from network capabilities, have been gradually replacing some of their printed counterparts. In order to utilize the growing range of e- databases. Students and research scholars must acquire and practice the skills

necessary to exploit them. “For students using a variety of on-line databases, it is as though they were parking lot attendants, where every vehicle is not only a different make and model but has a different configuration” (Blandy and Libutti, 2013).

Ojo and Akande (2015) opined that students’ level of access, usage and awareness of e-database in some colleges of Education in Nigeria is not high and that the major problem, however, identified in their study, is lack of information retrieval skills for exploiting electronic resources, thus making the level of usage of resources by medical students very low. In the same vein, Ajuwon (2016), revealed that students could not use computers, and that the use of the database was because of lack of awareness, lack of access to computers, insufficient training and high cost of provision of electronic information resources subscription. Also, Dukic and Ahmed (2016), for example, indicated that use of electronic databases in developed countries is more than in developing countries because of poor ICT infrastructure and the huge cost of such resources. Anaraki and Babalhavaeji (2013) also pointed out that where students are not aware of the existence of electronic databases they tend to use general search engines to meet their information needs.

According to Balogun (2014), it is apparent that the use of these electronic database require special skills in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) that will help students navigate the maze of resources at their disposal via telecommunications channels. Tella, Ayeni and Omoba, (2015) reiterated that the ability to use e-database efficiently depends on basic computer skills, knowledge of what is available and how to use it, and ability to define a research problem. Tella, Ayeni and Omoba (2015) further argued that the students’ ability to find and retrieve information effectively is a transferable skill useful for their future life as well as enabling the positive and successful use of the electronic resources whilst at school. They noted that in this digital era any student at the higher level who wants to perform better should have the ability to explore the digital environment.

Students are increasingly expected to use e-database whilst at the college; to make use of the growing range of electronic resources, students must acquire and practice the skills necessary to exploit them (Okello-Obura and Magara 2014). Lawson (2015) posited that skills learning is essential in a technology-driven environment but can be enhanced tremendously through the use of innovative learning strategies. In spite of the humongous potential in the use of e-databases,

there are some hindrances and challenges to its effective use. The following are some of the findings identified by Ochs (2015); language barrier, inadequate infrastructure (computers, electricity, toner cartridge etc) and limited access (Library hours).

According to Okiki and Asiru (2015), the awareness and utilization of electronic resources is very important as to the academic performance of students because it is perceived that when these resources are accessible, the use will be easy and may contribute to the academic performance and the development of the library. Kiondo (2015), reported that electronic resources provide access and use. The awareness of electronic resources enhances students' academic performance by providing information needed for research.

Ojo and Akande (2015) stated that students' level of access, usage and awareness of electronic information resources, Nigeria was not high and that the major problem however identified in their study is lack of information retrieval skills for exploiting electronic resources, thus making the level of usage of resources by students very low. Ajuwon (2013) posited that students studied could not use a computer, and that the use of the database was poor, due to lack of awareness, lack of access to computers, insufficient training and high cost of provision of electronic information resources subscription.

Awareness and use of electronic information resources is very important so as to keep students alert of the available media through which they can access needed information. It is apparent that the use of these electronic information resources require special skills in information and communication technologies (ICTs) that will help students navigate the maze of resources at their disposal via telecommunications channels (Balogun, 2014). It is also imperative to understand the purpose of using electronic information resources by students.

Libraries are gradually establishing resource sharing to reduce cost and meet the requirements of user demands. This establishes a direct link between libraries and information services with joint influence on knowledge discovery and dissemination in the digital era. The use of information technology has created advance contribution in the information technology field which has improved the services of libraries significantly. Besides, the application of ICT, libraries are providing opportunities to users to access and utilize both online resources and other services effectively.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design according to Nworgu (2015) survey research is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The area of this study is Federal College of Education, Okene. The study population is 200 undergraduate Students of Federal College of Education, Okene. It is made up of the entire registered NCE I, NCE II and NCE III undergraduate students for the 2023/2024 academic session. Simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study because of its simplicity and the nature of the research. A sample size of 200 respondents was selected using random sampling technique. The research instrument used for this research is the questionnaire. The data collected for this study was analysed using frequency and mean scores. A four point modified likert scale was used and the mean score is 2.50.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of electronic databases among undergraduate students of Federal College of Education, Okene?

Table 1: The level of awareness and channel of awareness of the electronic databases.

S/N	ITEMS	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\sum fx$	\bar{x}	Decision
		4	3	2	1			
1.	Academic Search	78	52	46	24	200	2.9	Accepted
		312	156	92	24	584		
2.	Google Scholars	68	54	40	38	200	2.7	Accepted
		272	162	80	38	552		
3.	JSTOR	74	56	41	29	200	2.8	Accepted
		296	168	82	29	575		
4.	Nexis Uni	84	33	46	37	200	2.8	Accepted
		336	99	92	37	564		
5.	ScienceDirect	56	66	54	24	200	2.7	Accepted
		224	198	108	24	554		
6.	Scopus	44	50	60	46	200	2.4	Not Accepted
		176	150	120	46	491		
7.	Web of science	68	54	41	37	200	2.7	Accepted

	272	162	82	37	553		
8. PubMed/Medline	68	54	40	38	200	2.6	Accepted
	272	162	80	38	552		

Among the items on the level of awareness and channels of awareness of the electronic databases among undergraduate students of Federal college of Education, Okene, the items accepted upon on their usage includes; academic search, google scholar, JSTOR, Nexis Uni, Science Direct, Scopus, and Pubmed/Medline, with mean scores of 2.9, 2.7, 2.8, 2.8, 2.7, and 2.6, respectively. Among the items, one of the item was not accepted which include; Scopus with mean score of 2.4.

Research question 2: What is the frequency of the use of electronic databases by undergraduate students of Federal College of Education, Okene.

Table 2: Frequency of use of electronic databases by undergraduate students of Federal College of Education, Okene.

S/N	ITEM	Daily 4	Weekly 3	Monthly 2	Yearly 1	$\sum fx$	\bar{x}	Decision
9.	Academic Search	70 280	60 180	45 90	27 27	200 577	2.8	Accepted
10.	Google scholar	65 260	57 171	50 100	28 28	200 448	2.9	Not Accepted
11.	JSTOR	78 312	46 138	48 96	28 28	200 559	2.8	Accepted
12.	Nexis Uni	77 308	46 138	32 64	45 45	200 555	2.7	Accepted
13.	ScienceDirect	80 320	50 150	40 80	30 30	200 580	2.9	Accepted
14.	Scopus	56 224	48 144	51 102	45 45	200 515	2.4	Not Accepted
15.	Web of Science	80 320	50 150	40 80	30 30	200 580	2.9	Accepted

16. PubMed/Medline	56	48	51	45	200	2.5	Not Accepted
	224	144	102	45	515		

The table above shows the frequency use of electronic databases by undergraduate students of Federal College of Education, Okene. In the table, the following items were acceptable which includes; Academic search, Google scholar, JSTOR, Nexis Uni, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, and PubMed/Medline, with mean scores of 2.8, 2.9, 2.8, 2.7, 2.9, 2.9 and 2.5 respectively. Among the items not accepted as frequency of use of electronic databases by undergraduate students of Federal College of Education, Okene include Scopus with mean score of 2.4 respectively.

Research question 3: What are the challenges in the use of electronic databases in Federal College of Education, Okene?

Table 3: Challenges in the use of electronic databases in Federal College of Education, Okene.

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	$\sum fx$	\bar{x}	Decision
24.	Lack of awareness	70	60	45	27	200	2.8	Accepted
		280	180	90	27	577		
25.	Lack of access to computer	68	57	50	25	200	2.8	Accepted
		272	171	100	25	568		
26.	Lack of information retrieval skills	56	66	40	38	200	2.7	Accepted
		224	198	80	38	540		
27.	Insufficient training	70	46	39	45	200	2.7	Accepted
		280	138	78	45	541		
28.	Technical problem	80	50	40	30	200	2.9	Accepted
		320	150	80	30	580		
29.	Unavailability of e-resources	56	48	51	45	200	2.5	Accepted
		224	144	102	45	515		
30	Technical know-how	70	40	40	30	200	2.5	Accepted
		280	120	80	30	510		

31 Inadequate facilities	70	56	45	28	200	2.8	Accepted
	280	168	90	28	566		
32. Unskilled library staff	56	66	40	38	200	2.7	Accepted
	224	198	80	38	540		

The above table shows the challenges of postgraduate students in the use of electronic databases in Federal College of education, Okene. All the items on the table that was accepted as the challenges includes; Lack of awareness, Lack of access to computer, Lack of information retrieval skills, Lack of training, Technical problem, inadequate facilities and unskilled library staff with mean scores of 2.8, 2.8, 2.7, 2.7, 2.9, 2.9, 2.5, 2.5, 2.8 and 2.7 respectively.

Research Question 4: What are Strategies to promote the awareness and utilization of e-databases by undergraduate students for improved academic performance?

Table 4: Strategies to promote the awareness and utilization of e-databases by undergraduate students for improved academic performance.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\sum fx$	\bar{x}	Decision
		4	3	2	1			
33.	Marketing of electronic databases	78	52	46	24	200	2.9	Accepted
		312	156	92	24	584		
34.	Designing a website	68	54	40	38	200	2.7	Accepted
		272	162	80	38	552		
35.	Provision of online information literacy platform	74	56	41	29	200	2.8	Accepted
		296	168	82	29	575		
36.	Training and retraining of staff	84	33	46	37	200	2.8	Accepted
		336	99	92	37	564		
37.	Library orientation	56	66	54	24	200	2.7	Accepted
		224	198	108	24	554		
38.	Provision of digital facilities	60	50	44	46	200	2.6	Accepted
		240	150	88	46	524		

39. Provision of internet connectivity	88 352	54 156	30 60	28 28	200 596	3.0	Accepted
40. User freindliness	54 216	56 168	51 102	39 39	200 525	2.6	Accepted

The table above shows the strategies to promote the awareness and utilization of e-databases by undergraduate student of Federal College of Education, Okene for improved academic performance. These items includes; marketing of electronic databases, designing a website, provision of online information literacy platform, training and retraining of staff, library orientation, provision of digital facilities, provision of internet connectivity and user’s friendliness with a mean score of 2.9, 2.7, 2.8, 2.8, 2.7, 2.6, 3.0 and 2.6 respectively.

Discussion of Findings

Level of awareness and channels of awareness of the electronic databases among undergraduate students of Federal College of Education, Okene

Table one reveals the Level of awareness and channels of awareness of the electronic databases among undergraduate students of Federal College of Education, Okene. These include; Academic search, Google scholar, JSTOR, Nixis Uni, ScienceDirect, Web of Science and PubMed/Medline. This is in line with Prangya and Rabindra (2013) who stated that Academic search, Google scholar, JSTOR, Nixis Uni, ScienceDirect, Web of Science and PubMed/Medline are available e-databases. He reiterated that awareness is core to the usage of e-database; where materials are in closed access, users’ ease of access to such e-resources is by far reduced, but where they are in open access (not subscription-based), undergraduate students find and use them.

Frequency of use of electronic databases by undergraduate students of Federal College of Education, Ankpa

Table two (2) reviews the Frequency of use of electronic databases by undergraduate students of Federal College of Education, Ankpa. The study revealed that Academic search, Google scholar, JSTOR, Nixis Uni, ScienceDirect, Web of Science and PubMed/Medline are frequently used e-databases by undergraduate students.

Challenges in the use of electronic databases in Federal College of Education, Okene.

From table three (3) revealed the challenges undergraduate students faces in the use of electronic databases in Federal College of Education, Okene. The challenges are; lack of awareness, lack of access to computer, lack of information retrieval skills, lack of training and technical problem. Aderibigbe and Farouk (2017) supported this findings by concluding that the major problems hindering effective utilization were inadequate fund, irregular power supply, inadequate infrastructure like photocopier, computers, air conditioner for the marketing of library services, unavailability of staff, low computer literacy among staff, lack of professional training in marketing, under staffing, limited media access, death of library materials to market, and also library management do not have marketing policy.

Strategies to promote the awareness and utilization of e-databases by undergraduate students for improved academic performance

From table four (4), it was revealed that respondent consent that the strategies to promote the awareness and utilization of e-databases by undergraduate students for improved academic performance are the use of library website, devising training programme, advertising in print media, word of mouth endorsement, sending out newsletters and flyers, frequent power supply, provision of required equipment/facilities, training and retraining of library staff and frequent internet connectivity.

Conclusions

From the analysis and discussion of findings, the researcher observed that the skill and knowledge of skills experience with the use of electronic databases by undergraduate students are internet skills, information retrieval skills, information searching skills, cataloguing and classification skills, information storage skills, information preservation skills and information exploiting skills.

The challenges undergraduate students faces in the use of electronic databases in Federal College of Education, Okene. The challenges are; lack of awareness, lack of access to computer, lack of information retrieval skills, and lack of training and technical problem.

Finally, the study revealed that respondent consent that the strategies to promote the awareness and utilization of e-databases by undergraduate students for improved academic performance are

the use of library website, devising training programme, advertising in print media, word of mouth endorsement, sending out newsletters and flyers, frequent power supply, provision of required equipment/facilities, training and retraining of library staff and frequent internet connectivity.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The library should employ more effective strategies such as using e-mail alert messages, text messages Mobiles services technologies as a method of awareness and use of the library's electronic databases.
2. Also, librarians have a role to play in making these electronic databases known to undergraduate students by physically meeting with them and educating on them on its uses and benefits and the need to develop their information retrieval skills.
3. Students should be educated on the use of e-databases for improved library patronage.
4. There should be a training programme organized for library staff and students on the operation and use of e-databases.
5. There should be awareness through advertising in print media, word of mouth endorsement, sending out newsletters and flyers on the need to use e-databases.
6. They should be frequent power supply to facilitate the use of audio-visual resources.
7. Provision of digital facilities to access database resources.

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Authors Note

Prisca Oluchi CHUKS-IBE (PhD), Department of Library and Information Science, Federal University of Technology, Minna
pochuksibe@futminna.edu.ng 08039695496

Oluwatosin Daniel AKOBE, E-Librarian/Lecturer, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa
akobeoluwatosindaniel@gmail.com +2348168681945