Digital Divide:
Issues and Strategies for Intervention in Nigerian Libraries

Jerome Idiegbeyan-ose, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria

Christopher Nkiko, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria

Mary Idahosa, Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Nigeria

Nwanne Nwokocha, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper discussed digital divide, issues and strategies for intervention in Nigerian libraries. It defined digital divide as the gap that exist between countries, within countries, individuals, families and so on in their access and usage of Information Technology facilities such as the internet, computers, laptops, various handheld devices, application software etc. The paper also discussed the causes of digital divide comprising finance, level of education, location of the individual and language as well as discussing the effects of digital divide to encompass inequality in access to information; ineffective services to users, libraries being unable to satisfy their clientele. The paper went further to discuss the present state of ICT facilities adoption and use by Libraries in Nigeria, compared to their equals in developed countries. The paper pointed out that most Nigerian libraries are far from full automation and Internet connectivity; the staff lack technical skills to build and maintain ICT for enhanced service delivery; libraries in rural areas of these developing countries are more neglected as available ICT facilities and internet connections are mostly available and accessible in the urban areas thus, those leaving in the rural areas are cut off from the numerous benefits of ICT. The paper concluded that Digital divide is a menace that affects information availability and access; growth and development in between countries and within countries and has led to inequality in access and use of ICT facilities as such, Nigerian libraries should wake up to their responsibilities by providing the required infrastructure needed to bridge the gap to prevent the escalation of digital divide. The paper finally recommended the formulation and implementation of ICT policy, adequate funding of libraries by those concerned, education and training of human resources to build and maintain ICT facilities, curriculum innovation by library schools so as to inculcate ICT courses for skills acquisitions of the professionals, improvement of maintenance culture and eradication of corruption in the entire system to enable developing countries take advantage of ICT facilities, make progress and move along with modernity and global sophistication.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology (ICT) has revolutionized the modern society; it has become prevalent as a source of computerisation for information systems in the 21st century. These ICT facilities (internet connections, computers, scanners, photocopy machines laptops, various handheld devices, application software, online databases etc) are however, unevenly distributed as a result of several factors. One of such factors is the fact that certain people have more access

to technology than others and this has resulted in a technological gap referred to as digital divide. Debates and arguments abound on the effect of digital divide between industrialized and emerging countries. While industrialised countries enjoy the returns of Information Technologies in almost all spheres of life, evolving nations have not tapped into the numerous benefits of these technologies.

As a result of developments in information communication technologies, the information gaps between the 'information-rich' and the 'information-poor' have expanded over time and this has caused exclusion of some countries of the world from maximising the benefits of ICT and belonging to the international community (Iskandarani, 2008).

Kennedy and Davis (2006) pointed out that the rapid expansions of the use of digital technologies have had a positive significant influence on many aspects of daily life. ICT facilities have intensely altered the cultures and the economies of the world. As it is in other fields of human endeavour, there is no facet of library and information undertakings that digital handling and ICT facilities are not applicable to.

Digital proficiency is of particular importance when information is to be collected, stored, salvaged, disseminated and appraised. ICT has transformed contemporary societies; the growth has brought the world closer thus, posing many tasks for international assimilation, among which is the digital gap phenomenon. Hargittai (2003) stressed that with the rise of ICT in all spheres of life, there is an enlarged concern regarding the form of its differences across populations, leading to digital inequalities in access and use of ICT facilities either by sex, race, ethnic minorities, income differences, place of residence, educational level and so on.

MEANING OF DIGITAL DIVIDE

The word digital gap explains the fact that the world can be distributed into countries who have and countries who do not have access to, and the competence to use current information technology. In Nigeria, the inequitable access to the computer network is attributable to the poor state of ICT infrastructure and lack of adequate investment in the society to support the new communication technology. Issa & Daura (2010) explained that there is a inequality in the level of accessibility to ICT between developed and developing countries. This disparity in access and use of information technology is called digital divide.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2001) defined Digital divide as the gap between different persons, homes, industries and topographical areas at different social-economic ranks with regard to their prospects to access Information Technology (IT) and use of the Internet.

Wilson (2004) defined digital divide as a disparity in access, circulation and use of ICT between populations. According to Wilson, there are eight facets of the digital gap: physical access, fiscal access, intellectual access, project access, content access, production access, institutional access and political access. Digital divide is the disparities in ICT use between people living in different parts of the world; the divide between the developed and developing countries and the information poor may become further marginalized in the society, (Norris 2001 cited by Ismail, Ahmad and Affandy, 2013, Oladokun and Aina, 2011, Hargittai, 2003). Bracey (2010) reported that many people ignore the digital divide; they say it is the black versus white and or rural versus distant. Some say it is marginal versus rich or the United States of America as opposed to the rest of the world and that it will progressively filter down to those who have and the have not. Some see the technology as male with some women involvement.

The digital divide expanses across the fault lines of information society. The Information society is where every individual can generate, access, exploit and share information and knowledge. It empowers persons, groups and individuals to attain their full potential and generate sustainable development as well as improving their quality of life. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA, 2006) describe Librarians as information keepers and providers that make information access possible. This

9 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/article/digital-divide/172153

Related Content

Data Mining with Incomplete Data
Hai Wangand Shouhong Wang (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 526-530).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/data-mining-incomplete-data/10870

Humanities Data Warehousing
Janet Delve (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 987-992).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/humanities-data-warehousing/10941

An Introduction to Kernel Methods
Gustavo Camps-Valls, Manel Martínez-Ramónand José Luis Rojo-Álvarez (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1097-1101).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/introduction-kernel-methods/10958

Association Rules and Statistics
Martine Cadot, Jean-Baptiste Majand Tarek Ziadé (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 94-97).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/association-rules-statistics/10804

Comparing Four-Selected Data Mining Software
Richard S. Segall (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 269-277).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/comparing-four-selected-data-mining/10832