

Chapter 10

Opportunities and Challenges of E–Book Readers and Mobile Devices in Libraries: Experiences From Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

There is a common saying that “books are the windows to the world.” Despite the fact that in this digital age the leading role is taken by the internet, books still play their part as openings to the vast knowledge. It is no longer news that changes have been brought to the book world due to the development in modern technology. As we have printed contents, so also are digital version of books or e-books which can be read on any digital devices with e-book reader applications installed. This development enables people to have a library in their pockets. This chapter examines the experience of Nigeria and the utilization of mobile devices, libraries, e-book readers, and mobile devices for reading. This chapter will also discuss the future potential of mobile applications in libraries and opportunities associated with e-book readers and mobile devices. This chapter also identifies the challenges associated with the use of e-book readers and mobile devices and the way forward towards promoting the use of e-book readers and mobile devices for reading in Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

A book is a thing of knowledge and wonder; to be held, read, and understood. Reading is a way to gain knowledge, new ideas, and a new perspective. Imagine a room, filled ceiling to floor with all the books from all over the world (Perrine, 2010). It would take an inconceivable amount of space to store that much knowledge in a paper book form. Now imagine that entire library contained in an easily held device, with any book desired available at the touch of a button. Reading fanatics have been granted their greatest wish with the invention of electronic books, and the reading devices that contain them. The benefits of this new technology are numerous, but there are a few disadvantages as well.

It is estimated that 1 out of 4 people own a Smartphones (i.e. phones classified as having Internet access like iPhones, Windows Phones, and Android Phones); every year, more patrons are demanding libraries bring their services to the gadgets they love. Similarly, as Cummings, Merrills and Boreli (2010) indicated, varieties of studies have been conducted about handheld or small screen devices and their impact on library services. Several researchers have studied the use of library materials by handhelds. At the University of Alberta, Carney et al. (2004) found in response to their survey question, “Which of the following library materials would you like to be able to download to your PDA.” that the two most popular responses were database search results 75 percent and 46 percent catalog search results. This implied that e-reader and mobile devices are currently changing the landscape of libraries especially academic libraries. The increasing prevalence of handheld mobile computing devices such as PDAs and web-enabled cell phones warrants are exerting lots of impact on libraries and the services.

The adoption of the digital devices such as smartphone and others prompted more and more libraries to “mobilize” library collections and services and to review how usable their library websites were on mobile devices. Consequent on this, libraries started introducing mobile-friendly databases to patrons; acquired and circulated handheld devices like the iPod and the iPad; incorporated mobile devices into library orientation, instruction, and reference activities; and added mobile-optimized websites and, in some cases, even native library apps. The libraries in Nigeria such as their counterpart in the developed nations have key in to tap the potentials and opportunities of digital devices. It is on this note that this chapter discusses the mobile devices and e-readers in libraries use of e-book readers and mobile devices for reading, future potentials of mobile application in the libraries, opportunities Associated with e-book reader and mobile devices, mobile devices and e-reader in the libraries: experiences from Nigeria, challenges associated with the use of e-book reader and mobile devices and the way forward towards promoting the use of e-book readers and mobile devices for reading in the Nigeria.

MOBILE DEVICES AND LIBRARIES

Mobile devices are portable, wireless computing device that is small enough to be used while held in the hand. The mobile devices are reshaping the information users’ everyday lives in diverse ways, especially by delivering content in versatile forms. A mobile device or application (app) is computer software designed specifically for handheld mobile devices such as a smartphone or a tablet (Counte, 2018). Most apps allow users to access similar content, functions and services available on personal computers (PCs). Mobile apps must typically be bought and downloaded online, but there are many available at no-cost.

Mobile devices, such as smart phones, tablets, e-book readers, handheld gaming tools and portable music players are practically omnipresent in today’s society. According to Walsh (2012), mobile data

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