

From Seclusion to Network: The Aspects Brought About by Internet in Libraries

Dr. Chipo Mutongi

PhD, MSc, MBA, BA, HND-LIS, Dip-Edu, Dip-LIS, Dip-P Magnt, Dip- Salaries Admn.
Zimbabwe Open University

ABSTRACT

The use of technology has caused libraries and librarians from different nations to interact with each other in new and different ways. Librarians can now connect with other librarians, researchers and experts throughout the world. Interlibrary loaning is also facilitated through the use on the internet. Virtual working and virtual libraries can flourish as the physical boundaries have been removed by the internet. This article explores the aspects brought about by the internet to the libraries and librarians.

Key words: internet, libraries, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Information, knowledge, globalisation, Librarian, network.

Date of Submission: 12 -06-2017

Date of acceptance: 20-07-2017

I. INTRODUCTION

The internet creates new winners and buries the laggards (Kotler, 2005). The increasing use of Information and Communication Technologies in all aspects of society makes confident, creative and productive use of ICT an essential skill for life. Librarians and other information professionals have to be well versed in ICT tools and applications for their efficient and effective day to day operations which include the internet. The internet capability is fundamental to participation and engagement in modern society. It removes the physical boundaries and facilitates knowledge sharing hence transforming the economy into a knowledge based economy.

The internet have brought some new ways of doing things and has lessens the duration of long processes. The internet has facilitated global interaction and socialization, Research and development. Physical boundaries have also been done away with hence leading to the creation of a global village. However, the internet cannot be without challenges and disadvantages. ICT has resulted in some new forms of crimes of which implementing some of the laws can be difficult. New viruses are created for the dysfunctional of ICTs and also intruders have been accessing the information that they have no authorized access to. Thus one has also to be equipped with skills of managing these challenges. It is of paramount importance for librarians and other information professionals to be well versed with Information and Communication Technologies tools and applications in this world of information superhighway and knowledge economy.

Today, one has to run very fast in order to stay in the same position (Kotler, 2005). The internet has facilitated a global village of which different librarians throughout the works can meet virtually for idea, information and knowledge sharing.

II. WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

The Internet is named after the Internet Protocol, the standard communications protocol used by every computer on the Internet. The Internet can powerfully leverage your ability to find, manage, and share information. Never before in human history has such a valuable resource been available to so many people at such little cost. The internet is a massive network of networks, a networking infrastructure. It connects millions of computers together globally, forming a network in which any computer can communicate with any other computer as long as they are both connected to the Internet. Information that travels over the Internet does so via a variety of languages known as protocols.

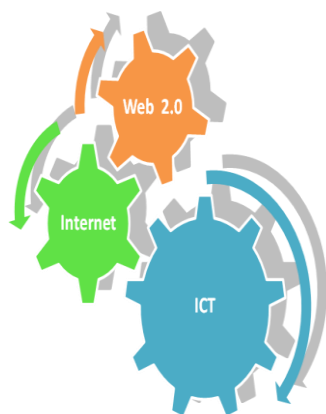


Figure 1: The internet

Figure I shows that web 2.0 is a byproduct of the ICT which has also given birth to web 2.0 but not everything that is on ICT and internet is web 2.0.

III. THE ROLE/ ADVANTAGES/ IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERNET

The internet has brought in so many great opportunities and advantages. Some of these opportunities and advantages are discussed below:

Instant retrieval and dissemination of information

Information can now be instantly retrieved and disseminated from the internet. The internet allows quick, cheap and easy distribution of information. Internet information can be disseminated and located anywhere and can be accessible from an international organisation for example International Library Association. The internet is a way of distributing organization's messages to shareholders and stakeholders all over the world.

Research , Education and knowledge sharing

The internet and the web help people and organizations in research and education. People and organizations can collaborate on research projects. Research results can be distributed to people and organisations worldwide hence leading to problem solving and awareness. The learned process is therefore enhanced. People can also study and enroll with different colleges and universities on the internet. Online libraries have also facilitated research and education. The internet enhances knowledge sharing and facilitates researches through e-library, e-publishing and online searches and researches.

Marketing and public relations

Marketing and public relations are activities in which every organisation must participate and the internet enhances these activities. An avenue of marketing and public relations is open to every

organisation worldwide as a result of the internet. More organisations including information centres are using the internet to sell, advertise, market and too buy products and services for example amazon.com which advertises, markets and sell books and other learning related products and services.

Globalisation

The internet makes people and organizations get into the international marketplace. It provides a global communication network that is vital to creating a global business presence. There is no longer need to travel from one country to another seeking goods and services as they can be accessed through the web. The internet has facilitated the global village.

Cost containment

The internet is now the infrastructure of choice for electronic commerce. Businesses are given an easier way of linking each other at a very low cost as compared to manual business transactions. Transaction costs have been reduced. Information on buyers, sellers and prices for goods and services is readily available on the web. In so doing web based systems reduce costs and delivery time for goods and services that can be distributed via the internet for example electronic books and software packages.

Growth and entertainment

People need to grow and learn new ideas and also need to refresh. This helps in socialization processes. The internet is a great place to learn, grow and be entertained. There are many opportunities for lifelong learning and people find information about any subject or issue of their interest. Users can find out about current events worldwide thereby keeping them abreast with up to date information. Electronic journals and newspapers can be read on the internet. Travel information is also shown on the web and whether conditions. This helps in making people who travel a lot find out about travel expenses and weather conditions before departure and online booking can be done. There are social networks on the internet which enhances growth and entertainment for example facebook, twoo, skype, LinkedIn and twitter. People in the same field for example librarians can socially meet on the web throughout the world through the use of library 2.0.

Altering the production process and increasing the speed of distribution

It takes a long time to write letters manually and send them to all library users. One typed letter can be electronically e-mailed to all library users within a second.

Creating new products and services

The internet has created new products and services for example web designing, Web Designer, Web Master and electronic money transfer. The services also include e- librarianship and e-publishing.

Erasing limitations of traditional geographic markets

One can buy from Japan, China, United Kingdom and all over the world without necessarily have to travel there whilst using the internet. Cutting boundaries resulting in a global village hence facilitates globalization.

Economies of scale

Economies of scale are the cost advantages that a business can exploit by expanding their scale of production. Production of goods and services has been increased as businesses can now serve the whole world through the use of the internet. This has resulted in low prices.

Easy communication

The internet has enhanced easy communication through e- mail. The communication process has been made quicker and cheaper and there is immediate feedback due to the use of the e-mail. Communication has also been facilitated through facebook and twitter and other social networks as well as through video conferencing.

E-business and e-commerce

The internet has resulted in e-commerce, e-business, e- banking, e- library, e-education and e-knowledge. E- business means electronic business. It is the conducting of business using the electronic information communication systems the internet and cellphone and an Automated Teller Machine (ATM). It involves e-banking, e-communicating and working from home via internet. E-librarianship is an example of e- business. It also involves electronic buying and selling, advertising and marketing of products and services. E-commerce means electronic commerce and is an emerging model on new selling and merchandising tools in which buyers are to participate in all phases of a purchase decision, while stepping through those processes electronically rather than in a physical store. It is the electronic commerce which involves the distributing, buying, selling, marketing of products and services over electronic systems such as the internet, other computer networks and cellphone. It is aimed at commercial transactions which involve electronic money transfer, supply chain management, e.-marketing, electronic data interchange, automated inventory management systems and automated data collection systems. Electronic commerce makes use of electronic communication technologies such as internet, extranet, e-book, databases, electronic catalogues and

mobile phones. Amazon.com is an example of e-business and e-commerce which specializes in e-books selling, e-publishing, e-marketing of books and also electronically sells computers and its accessories.

Virtual working

The debates on teleworking and virtual working organisations as well as the Information Society generally are keen to play up the growing importance of information in work processed and products (Jackson, 1999). Ellis (2005:4) proffers that because the knowledge worker's key asset (knowledge) is easily portable the tyranny of the office location can now be broken. Knowledge workers can more easily become location-independent capitalising on new technology to keep them fully connected with the rest of the organisation, customers or colleagues. Through the use of the internet a librarian can work virtually in his/her country or outside the country at the comfort of his/her home.

IV. THE CHALLENGES OF THE INTERNET

The following are some of the challenge brought about by the use of the internet:

Created a digital divide

Digital divide is a term coined for the disparity between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in the technology revolution. Those in the developing countries find it expensive to access the internet. Many have feared grave consequences for those unable to access the power of the Internet; however, recent reports suggest that this divide is narrowing, rather than expanding (National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 2000:1).

Expensive to the developing countries and the have not.

Those in the developing countries find it expensive to access the internet.

Lose of some jobs

Instead of having Sales Representative and Marketing Officers, the internet can do all those activities.

Existence of false websites

There are some false websites on the internet which end up stealing people's money for example through credit cards.

Virus

The internet has brought in with lots of virus which damages information and ICTs.

Difficulty to implement laws

It has become difficult to implement some of the laws as one can unlawful trade on the internet. Copyright

act is now difficult to implement as one can download the whole book at no cost and possess it.

Information and knowledge need to be often updated

Failure to often update the websites can result in false data and information.

Ergonomics challenges

Ergonomics is such a word derived from the Greek *ergon* (work) and *nomos* (law) and has been defined as the scientific study of the relationship between man and his working environment and the application of anatomical, physiological and psychological knowledge to the problems arising from them (Appleby, 1994:333). These problems can be sitting arrangements while on computer which results in backache, too much light affecting eyes and fatigue.

Power cuts in developing countries

In Zimbabwe for example there is always a power cut which affects the functioning of the internet.

Lack of electricity distribution in developing countries

There is lack of electricity distribution in developing countries which then limits the utilisation of this facility.

Information overload

The internet has come with the information overload. We are now living in the information society and global village of which we are bombarded with huge sums of information which is not all relevant to us (Mutongi and Chiwanza, 2016). People can have more information than necessary and most of the information may be irrelevant.

Dangerous information

Dangerous information is shared for example information on how to rob, kill and abort and use of dangerous drugs.

Internet dependent syndrome

One can develop an internet dependent syndrome which affects the natural socialization process and work. The face-book has also facilitated this syndrome. One instead of doing work or physical socialization with others and the family members can be always busy on the internet. Johnson (2003:20) avers that "objects or environments have certain properties that lead to different types of behaviour. Just as importantly whenever technology is used to mediate communication or behaviour in some way, the tool not only affords certain behaviours, but also removes the need for, or opportunity to conduct other aspects of behaviour". The internet affords new patterns of interaction but with the accompanying cost for instance a loss of non-verbal cues during the interaction except in video conferencing and other technologies whereby you will be able to see the non-verbal cues.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following The Identified Internet Challenges, The Following Recommendations Were Given:

- Information literacy training should be acquired by everyone in order filter the necessary from the unnecessary.
- There is need for, use of firewall, passwords, antivirus software to curb against dangerous information
- Continuous computer training, use of other electricity substitutes, encryption, firewall, proper sitting setups and lighting and backups are called for
- The developing nations should also often be uploading information such that their stories can be heard and such that the global village can be well balanced.
- Virtual working is called for of which librarians can work virtually everywhere and anytime at the comfort of the homes.

VI. CONCLUSION

The internet has facilitated networking of libraries and librarians in the global village. It has removed the physical boundaries and even enables virtual working. It is therefore necessary to guard against dependent syndrome, cybercrime and viruses. Information literacy is called for to curb information overload.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Appleby, R.C (1994) *Business Administration*. Harlow: Financial Times.
- [2]. Ellen, S (2005) *Knowledge-Base Working: Intelligent Operating for the Knowledge Age*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing.
- [3]. *National Telecommunications and Information Administration* (2000) obtained from:
<http://technologysource.org/extra/20/definition/3/>
- [4]. Jackson, P (1999) *Virtual Working*. London: Routledge.
- [5]. Johnson, A.N (2003) *Understanding the Psychology of Internet Behaviour: Virtual worlds, Real Lives*. London: Palgrave.
- [6]. Mutongi, C and Chiwanza, K (2016) "Information Literacy: 'Medicine' in Improving Ways of Managing Information Explosion to Information Seekers". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, Vol.5.Issue 7.pp 41-46.

Senn, J.A (1998) *Information Technology in Business: Principles, Practices and Opportunities*. London: Prentice Hall International.
Turban, E et al (2001) *Introduction to Information Technology*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Dr. Chipo Mutongi: A Part Time Lecturer at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) with more than ten years lecturing experience; PhD/DPhil research thesis Part Time Supervisor (ZOU). PhD/DPhil research thesis supervisor/ under study (2014-2016-ZOU),



Research Supervisor for all levels of education; member of the International Board of Reviewers for the International Journal of Doctoral Studies (IJDS); Journal Reviewer-Journal of Information and Knowledge Management (JIKM); published over thirty six articles in International Journals; DCIZ board member (2016), Member of Institute of People Management of Zimbabwe (IPMZ) and member of Zimbabwe Library Association (ZIMLA), published

more than ten modules with Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU); is in the process of authoring books on Knowledge Management and Information Policy. An Acting Talent Development Officer in the City of Harare, worked as a Librarian at the City of Harare with more than twelve years experience in library, information and knowledge management; attained the highest and most prestigious degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Information and Knowledge Management (ZOU); Master of Science in Library and Information Science (NUST); the more professional degree of Master of Business Administration (ZOU); Media Studies Degree (ZOU); Higher National Diploma in Library and Information Science (Harare Polytechnic); Diploma in Library and Information Science (Bulawayo Polytechnic); Diploma in Education (UZ); Diploma in Personnel Management (IPMZ); Diploma in Salaries Administration (Stallone Consultancy); Certificate in Desk Top Publishing (CCOSA); Certificate in Web Designing (People's College); Certificate in Computer Repairs (People's College).