

Library Search Engines and Library Gateways for Effective Legal Education: Implication for The University of Calabar Faculty of Law Library

Pius Tom Umoren

Law Librarian

University of Calabar

e-mail: umoren.pius@gmail.com

***Abstract** - This study examined library Search Engines and Gateways for effective legal education, implication for the University of Calabar Law Library. The sample population consisted of levels three and four students who are registered in the Law Library. A structured questionnaire was employed for collection of data. The study was designed to determine the extent of availability and utilization of library search engines for information access and retrieval for effective acquisition of legal knowledge in 10 core law courses. From the survey conducted and data gathered from respondents who make use of the Law Library, findings showed that the Law Library had, as at the time of this study, six (6) out of the 10 selected search engines for this study. It was also discovered that students made heavy use of the available search engines with those for Criminal Law and Law of Evidence being the most heavily used in online search for legal information. The study revealed that the major problems that militated against availability and use of the search engines in the Faculty of Law Library included lack of regular subscription for access and erratic power supply.*

Keywords: Law library, search engines, gateways, databases, legal education

INTRODUCTION

It is an acknowledged fact that the world today has become a global village. This is made possible because the internet has created a room for information to be made available to scholars, researchers and even the laymen at their door steps through its super highway.

In order to key into this global trend, a well equipped virtual library must of necessity be given a thought to, as the foundation and chief source of current on-line information, as well as the search agent for new facts and discovery of recorded knowledge. Thus, the library with e-resources and education are likened to twin sisters that always go together to enjoy completeness and fulfillment of targeted educational goals. According to Anyakoha (2005) creating internet access to knowledge and information can change the way people communicate, create, share and process information enormously.

The Library and Education

The library role in education in contemporary time is not confined to the traditional functions of acquisition of books, processing and organizing them for users. This role has been expanded to incorporate functions hitherto not contemplated but have now become imperative due to dynamism in every facet of the body polity. It is therefore common to find a standard library, especially in academic institutions undertaking diverse roles in aid of the institution's attainment of educational objective(s).

The University of Calabar library for example undertakes roles in aid of the University's attainment of objectives in diverse areas of educational training including legal education. These include:

- Teaching, through its Use of Library programme (GSS 101) by the Law Librarian.
- Learning, through its lending and borrowing services delivery
- Research, through its reference services of SDI (Selective dissemination of information) and patron's queries.
- Conservation of knowledge, through its acquisition of information materials, processing and storage in definitive sections and units for easy access.
- Acquisition and installation of the ICT with functional search engines and Gateways for easy access and utilization of information resources in aid of educational goals of the University.
- Extension services, through collaboration with publishers, book and other information resources' producers in mounting book fairs, symposia and other community related campaigns. Of course, it is an acknowledged fact that the library is the heart of all the University's work. It directly supports research work of the University and indirectly supports the University's educational and community service(s) work. Thus for the University or any tertiary institution to achieve its objectives, it must rely heavily, if not entirely, on the information content as stockpiled in the library whether in print or non print, in aid of the different programmes run by it. The implication of this is that it is the standard, in quality and quantity, of the information content of the library that the quality and standing of the University will be measured. Thus where the library is bereft of quality information resources in the print and non-print nature, the University will equally be bereft of credibility and quality of its programmes. Of course, according to Lord Denning in the case of *Macfoy v. United Africa Co. Ltd (1961) 3 1169, PC*, one cannot place something on nothing and expect it to stand. Therefore, attainment of objectives by institutions is geometrically predicated on their information acquisition infrastructures especially, the library, through its *search engines* and *gateways* for information search and retrieval utilities.

Need for Law Library and Online Information

Students of Law, legal practitioners and other clients of the Law Library look at the Law Library as a reservoir of legal information whether past or present, constantly updated with current legal information resources. With this special and unique nature, the Law Library must be developed

to serve as a mandatory tool for the teaching of law, research in law and sustenance of legal education. This state can be attained where necessary infrastructures are made available, the ICT being mandatory and compelling.

According to Uloko (2001) there are gaps in the runs of Law reviews, Law journals, Law reports, outdated editions of Law text books and of course absence of new titles. This malady seems why Law Library worth its salt should embrace the online train with a view to being current in its legal information materials. This, a Law Library can accomplish through acquisition and installation of e-collection network systems with functional search engines for timely access and retrieval of legal information.

For, according to Eyesin (2001) even the physical library may seem to disappear, no longer a building, a store house of knowledge physically recorded on paper, the new consulting library will be a “node in the virtual space of the digital encyclopedia providing access to electronic information on the network.” He thus concluded that the in thing now fast dominating every facet of endeavour, is, instead of an object-oriented culture, producing multiple copies of physical books of Law for each user, there is at our disposal a time and information culture clouded with the provision of online legal services charged per period of use.

Purpose of the study

This study investigated Law Library search engines and gateways, their availability and utilization by students and other information seekers in the Faculty of Law Library of the University of Calabar.

Research questions

- What are the available search engines for access and retrieval of information in the Faculty of Law Library, University of Calabar?
- What are the most often used search engines for access and retrieval of information in the Faculty of Law Library of the University of Calabar?
- How can the use of search engines and gate ways be improved for effective legal education?

Scope of study

The scope of the study was limited to:

The Faculty of Law Library of University of Calabar and the years 3 and 4 students who registered to make use of the Law Library in the first semester of the 2015/2016 school year.

Information for Effective User Education

Information is the unifying factor for attainment of goals. In this light, researchers interact with every available information sources and resources to satisfy their yearnings.

Thus while users will be embarking on information search, librarians especially in tertiary institutions, with their professional traits, will be leading them into the use of library *search engines* and *gateways* available to source and retrieve desired information. Therefore since there is always a mass of information available in different fields of knowledge, but the mass may not be relevant to the instant users and researchers, the need then arises for systematic selection of desired information out of the lot generated, hence the necessity for user education on *search engines* as well as *library gateways* in information search and retrieval.

Constituents Uses of Search Engines and Library Gateways

According to Lawal (2015) a search engine, sometimes called “intelligence agent,” “worm crawler,” “Spider” or “robot,” deals with specific pieces of information organized by overall subject categorization.

He goes on to say that a search engine when accessed will index all the information on all the publicly available web pages it finds based on the key words that are found in the web. It is from here that the search engine will collect the document in which the key words occur into the database for the researcher to source for desired information.

On the other hand, library gateways are a collection of reviewed and recommended databases usually created by subject specialists in libraries to support researches. Here again, Lawal, (2015) supra, says that gateways point to specialized data bases on the webs, created by subject experts with in-depth knowledge in specific fields to support research and reference links.

As cited in Webopedia (2015) a search engine is really a general class of programmes, often used to specifically describe on-line information systems like Google and Yahoo, etc. It is through the use of *search engines* that users access documents on the *world wide web*. In the same vein Wikipedia (2015) describes a search engine as a software system that is designed to aid search for information on the *world wide web*. It goes on to add that the nature of information to be found through search engines may be a mixture of web pages as well as other types of files.

From all the definitions with regard to search engines and library gateways, what is factual is that they are software programmes that can be activated to search for and identify items in a database. Thus with key words or characters specified by the user, information can be accessed through activation of particular sites on the *world wide web*.

Library gateways, on the other hand, are a collection of reviewed and recommended links (data bases) that have been created by subject specialists, most often librarians, in support of research needs. These gateways give direction to specialized data bases on the *world wide web*.

One important feature about these gateways is that they are created by professionals in different fields of endeavour as well as experts in governmental and business undertakings and interests with accumulation of compiled web links. It should be noted that although each of the gateways

is slightly different in information content, they, however provide access to searchable and browseable data bases of internet sources with high quality information content.

Characteristics of Search Engines and Library Gateways

The library is a social institution. As a social institution it also operates by using social network systems to interact and allow information interactions to manifest between and amongst different information seekers. This trait of the library can be regarded as its linkage role where it would serve as a link institution and also provide linkage infrastructures in ICT to ensure information access, processing, storage and distribution. Of course resource sharing is made possible through this.

According to Okebukola (2014) “linkages within the concept of academia are network of relations set up to explore areas of strength of a partnering institution for the purpose of bolstering teaching, research and service functions.”

Of course a close look at the above will reveal that in order to effectively ensure that information seekers, researchers and other socialites interact, search engines and gateways are installed in libraries as well as information centres to aid access and retrievals in furtherance of knowledge acquisition.

Thus, given the diversity in information contents of databases, there is need therefore for providers and custodians of search engines, gateways and other information managing systems (IMS) to be conscious of the different characteristics of Information and Social Network systems, for proper and healthy media content meant for researchers and other users.

It is obvious that every researcher will be looking for high quality information sites on the web and thus will go for a search engine as well as library gateway that have been reviewed and evaluated by experts and subject specialists making their information contents current, accurate and reliable.

It is instructive to cite the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) web site containing National Open University delivered distance learning resources, <http://nigeriauniversitiesdistancelearningnetwork.org>, which according to Ramon-Yusuf (2014), when accessed, are meant to contribute to “a national course and resource production plan” as well as serve as “links to the distance learning units of participating universities.”

In the same vein, libraries which are also regarded and treated as search engines and gateways personified, wherever established, must satisfy their primary roles of serving the information needs of researchers.

It is in this light that Foloruns and Familusi (2012) opine that “information therefore serves as ideas communicated, opinions, beliefs, value judgment, perception and knowledge to people in the society, business organizations, social gatherings and so on, which enables them to solve private and corporate problems.”

So that with information gathered and acquired through search engines and library gateways, peoples' minds especially researchers, will be educated culminating in the development of the three domains of learning, talking about the cognitive, affective and the psychomotor domains.

Going by the Glasgow Declaration on Library Information Services and Intellectual Freedom, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2011) acknowledges that its open access initiative is all about the discovery, elaboration and application of research in all fields to enhance progress sustainability and human well being which peer-reviewed literature is a vital component in the processes of research and knowledge acquisition.

Supporting this stand Eze (2012) states that those that play key roles in the recording and dissemination of research findings must recognize that such information must guaranty integrity of the disseminating system.

With the above therefore, *search engines* and *library gateways* must be created and configured to ensure that the under-listed traits are in contention to facilitate easy and appropriate use for overall development of the society.

1. Search engines and library gateways must save time of users who have tight schedules and limited time to locate information and therefore resort to information search through these channels.
2. They are created in such a way that key words, phrases, quotations and specific information buried in the full text of web pages can be located easily, no matter how vast the information content may be, thus facilitating information access promptly.
3. Databases are created with appropriate search engines and gateways to be able to give a wide range of responses to specific queries. These therefore will lead to information location and use without stress.
4. Created by specialists in various fields of knowledge, databases with appropriate search engines and gateways abound in the sciences, social sciences, humanities, law, engineering, etc. to aid researchers locate information and use same.
5. Search engines and library gateways are created to serve as research and reference links between information services' providers and researchers as well as other information seekers. They facilitate the use of information without barriers and by any needy client.
6. They are created with defined criteria designed for access to a wide range of web sources for information search and retrieval.
7. Information resources in recommended databases are peer-reviewed and evaluated hence are of high quality, accurate, reliable and current, suitable for further research efforts by scholars.

Population of study and sampling technique

The population of study consisted of two samples. One sample comprised years 3 and 4 registered students and other users of the Faculty of Law Library of University of Calabar covered in this study.

The second sample consisted of 10 different search engines and library gateways available in the Faculty of Law Library of the University of Calabar covered in this study.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the collection of data was the questionnaire which had two sections. Section one contained five items aimed at getting information on the bio-data of the respondents. Section two contained a close ended questions designed to collect information from the respondents about availability of search engines and their utilization as well as the problems they encounter while using the search engines. The respondents were required to tick () appropriate response variable that applies to them which were analyzed using simple percentages. Two Hundred of the questionnaire were produced and administered to third and fourth year students who made use of the Law Library to show their usage of the search engines. These were retrieved three days later to ensure that all the copies were endorsed by users of the Law Library.

Institution	Search Engines									
	West Law	Lexis Nexis	NU C	My Virtual Library	Internet Public Library	Google Scholar	Ebsco Host	JSt or	Mark er X	Resear ch Interne t
Faculty of Law Library, University of Calabar	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0

Presentation of Results

The results of the study and their analyses are presented based on the research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the available search engines for access and retrieval of information in the Faculty of Law Library of University of Calabar?

Table 1: Availability of search engines in the Faculty of Law Library, University of Calabar.

Findings on Table one revealed that the Faculty of Law Library of the University of Calabar has six (6) of the selected search engines for information search and retrieval which are accessible, representing 60% of the devices. From the table, my virtual Library, Internet Public Library, Marker X and Research tutorials were not accessible in the Law Library.

Research Question 2: What are the most often used search engines for access and retrieval of information in University of Calabar?

Table 2: Utilization of search engines by students and other clients in University of Calabar.

		Search Engines Users										
Students	Core Law Courses	West law	Nexis lexis	NUC virtual	My virtual	Internet public	Google scholar	Ebsco Host	Jstor	Marker X	Resources materials	Frequency
Year Three	Commercial Law	4	10	10	-	-	15	12	4	-	-	55
	Criminal Law	13	20	8	-	-	9	11	5	-	-	64
	Law of Tort	5	15	3	-	-	16	11	3	-	-	53
Year Four	Land Law	10	16	8	-	-	3	12	2	-	-	51
	Law of Evidence	8	22	5	-	-	10	12	5	-	-	62
	Equity and Trust	9	11	3	-	-	12	14	-	-	-	50

Findings from table two shows that the Faculty of Law Library had the highest number of patronage of 64 of third year student’s users and 62 of fourth year students users for online search of legal information in Criminal Law and Law of Evidence respectively. This was followed by 55 third year patrons and 51 fourth year patrons in search of online information in Commercial Law and Land Law respectively. 53 third year students and 50 fourth year students accessed online legal information in Law of Tort and Equity and Trust respectively. This, on the whole supports the fact that search engines aid legal education generally and specifically, learning, teaching and research in the University of Calabar.

Research Question 3: How can the use of search engines and gateways be improved for effective user education?

Findings from students who patronize the Law library in the University of Calabar show that two (2) major factors imilitate against their use of available search engines in the library. The first one is irregular and very unreliable access to the web sites. The students complain that the University authorities lag behind in their duty to regularly pay and subscribe to the available sites to grant them access. The second problem identified is that of erratic power supply. Of course, in one of the visits to the Faculty of Law library, this researcher met students in utter darkness waiting for electricity supply. As to how they (the students) can be helped to improve their use of the available e- resources, they were unanimous in their affirmation that the identified problems should be addressed.

CONCLUSION

Library and information user education has to do with the ability to search for information to acquire knowledge. Thus, this era of digitization requires searching for quality information sites on the web as well as library gateways that will ensure accuracy and currency of the information required. Therefore search engines and library gateways will remain veritable tools for researchers and information users and seekers in their bid to acquiring new knowledge and breaking frontiers of research and education. This, to the Law student, the legal practitioner and other quasi users of legal information, the much desired comprehensive legal education will be seen to be on course.

REFERENCES

1. Anyakoha, M. W. (2005) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Library and Information Services. *Coal city Libraries*. 1 (1) and (2) 1-6
2. Eseyin, E. G (2001) The Challenge of Change: The Impact of the Emerging Communication and Information Technologies on the Law Library in J. O. Malomo and E.O. Sholoja (Eds.) *Legal Information Collection and Development in the 21st Century*, Lagos: Nigerian Association of law Libraries.
3. Eze, J. U. (2012) Open Access to Literature Initiative: The perception and challenges to Nigerian public libraries and librarians. *Nigerian Libraries* 45 (1) 56-67.
4. Folorunso, O. and Familusi, E. B. (2012) towards the satisfaction of information needs of prisoners in South-West-Zone of Nigeria: Prison Libraries to the rescue. *Nigeria Libraries* 45 (1) 94-103.
5. IFLA (2011). IFAL statement on Open Access to scholarly literature and Research Documentation. Retrieved from www.ifla.org/v/cdoc/open-access04.html.
6. Lawal, O. O. (2015) Human Information Interaction: Technological implication of user studies in academic libraries. Lecture note, Unical: Department of Library and Information Science.
7. Okebukola, P. A (2014) Linkages research networking and collaboration: Impact on global ranking of Nigerians Universities. In Julius A. Okejie, Sola Akinrinada and Noel B. Saliu Eds. *The National Universities Commission and University Education in Nigeria; perspective on the development of a system*. Abuja: National Universities Commission.
8. Ramon-Yusuf, S. (2014) Trends in open and distance learning in the Nigerian Universities System. in Julius A. Okejie, Sola Akinrinada and Noel B. Saliu Eds. *The National Universities Commission and University Education in Nigeria: perspectives on the development of a system*. Abuja: National Universities Commission.
9. Uloko, G. I. (2001) Sustainable Collection Development in Nigerian Law Libraries: Problems and Prospects in the 21st Century in J. O. Malomo and E. O. Sholaja (Eds.) *Legal Information Collection and Development in the 21st Century*, Lagos: Nigerian Association of Law Libraries
10. Webopedia (2015) downloaded from www.webopedia.com
11. Wikipedia (2015) downloaded from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/web (the free Encyclopedia).

