

# USE OF ENGLISH and Communication Skills for Tertiary Education



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## Information Communication Technology (ICT) and the Use of the Library

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*Osagie Oseghale*

### **Introduction**

Research has been the driving force of development in the world. It has also been described as infrastructure for improvement and change. Research is undertaken in many contexts and largely by universities, industries, governments agencies and independent scholars. For any academic discipline to grow, research must continuously be carried out to extend the frontiers of knowledge in the discipline. Research generates scientific data and information needed for knowledge, decision and policy formulation.

Communication in research requires information networking. This is because a researcher needs to be familiar with developments in his or her field of research. Every researcher wants to share information, knowledge, and research findings with other persons working in related area. This is because information sharing creates awareness, informs potential users and provides feed-back that may lead to further research in order to improve on products and services. Hence information is a crucial element to research.

Owing to information explosion and the proliferation of information in electronic formats coupled with the opportunities offered by information communication technology (ICT), impactful research now requires appropriate infrastructure and communication facilities. The tools that facilitate efficient creation, communication and utilization of information



in the information age are computers and telecommunications, internet, and the World Wide Web (WWW). Very important and indispensable elements here are computer system with Internet connectivity, web browsers with appropriate search engines and e-mail facilities. That means that internet connectivity and familiarity with the computer are parts of the technical and professional equipment needed by all academic researchers to access, retrieve and disseminate research findings.

### **What is Research?**

Research has been described as a process of arriving at a reliable solution to problems through planning and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. It is the art of carrying out a thorough scholarly or scientific investigation into a specific or definite problem or phenomenon purposely to generate scientific information solely for knowledge and policy formulation in order to improve the functioning or performance of system. Research is geared towards finding out the relationship that exists among different things or objects in the environment. It involves activities designed to discover or probe fact and relationships that will make knowledge quite effective. Research is the most effective tool for advancement of knowledge and promotion of progress so that man would be able to relate more effectively with his environment by being able to resolve his difference and accomplish his purpose among other things.

Research generates intellectual knowledge, skills and information as outputs. These are communicated through journals, conference papers, theses, technical reports, unpublished papers, video films and sound recordings. The dissemination of research findings is considered an important aspect of research because a research is not known until it is disseminated widely to the scholarly and professional community.

### **Information**

Information is of critical value in the intricate and complex processes of research initiatives and execution. As the researcher wades through the segment of research problem identification and statement, objective and hypothesis formulation, methodology delineation, presentation and discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations and identification of new frontiers for further research, he relies on the accumulated body of knowledge as dependable ally. The dependence on information is critical for a number of reasons:

- First a researcher does not need to reinvent the wheel. Reinvention of the wheel as a concept in research means unintended duplication of completed research. Information provides enlightenment on completed research.
- Secondly, a researcher needs a guide on how to execute the research project of his choice or interest. By looking at the body of knowledge in his research area of interest, he is able to see how similar research initiatives were carried out as a guide to his present undertaking.
- Thirdly, a good research should ideally contribute to the existing body of knowledge. Information is critical to point out what already exists and where the present finding fits into the body of knowledge.
- Fourthly, there is no research that can claim to have exhausted the frontier of knowledge. Therefore, based on what was known before the commencement of a research and the additional input of the presently completed research, the researcher is able to provide information on future research perspectives. The past, present and the future are all linked together by the information denominator.

### **Attributes of Information**

To contribute to research, information as a variable must possess and display some attributes. These include:

- Relevance
- Verifiability
- Comprehensiveness
- Conciseness
- Timeless
- Availability
- Accessibility
- Understandability and
- Adaptability.

These attributes confer on information its instrumental value. Instrumental value means the extent to which particular information contributes to the resolution of conflict or problem situation, clarification of doubt, the enhancement of decision making, accuracy or support of theory, a position or research result. For example, the amendment of a law does not completely invalidate an existing one. But the specific aspects



that have been amended are vital to the process of updating the existing law. If the amended law is available but not accessible to a research, it means the instrumental value of accessibility is lacking and needs to come to play for the amended law to be fully appreciated. A vital tool that enhances the instrumental value of information is information communication technology.

### **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

As globalization now becomes a new concept in academic research, effective research requires communication networking. This is because a researcher has to be familiar with developments in his or her field of research. He needs to be able to share findings with other persons working in related areas. Information Communication Technology (ICT) is the greatest facilitator of this process. Information Technology (IT) has been described as an omnibus term that combines computer and telecommunications technology. Hence it is called information and communications technology (ICT). It is a term which encompasses the notion of the application of technologies to information handling (generation, storage, processing, retrieval, dissemination etc). ICT has been defined as the application of computer and other technology to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information.

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are tools and techniques for generating, manipulating, gathering, storing, retrieving, and dissemination of information. ICT provides numerous benefits and advantages to researchers. Some of the advantages include:

- Provision of speedy and easy access to information
- Provision of remote access to users
- Provision of round-the-clock access to users
- Provision of access to unlimited information from different sources
- Provision of up-to-date information
- Provision of information flexibility that can be adapted by any individual according to his or her requirement.
- Facilitation of reformatting and combining of data from different sources.

Information Technology is a tool, which provides opportunity for full organizational structure (i.e. to provide enhanced user satisfaction, cost effectiveness, integration faster and simpler programmes, rapid response

and easier operational procedures). A very crucial element in the use of ICT for research, is the computer with internet connection.

### **What is the Internet?**

The internet is mega tool in the world of information Technology (IT) that has shattered the defensive barriers of time, space, culture and languages, thereby compressing the world into a 'global village'. The Internet grew out of the need for fast and efficient communication means which prior to this period was dominated by facsimile (Fax) technology with its attended cost and limitations. But with the invention of the internet, you can send volumes of text messages with audio/visual attachment across the globe by the click of the mouse. It is a commercial world so to speak.

Many scholars have attempted to define the internet. While all the definitions are not precisely the same, there exists a thread linking all of them. In other words, there are common elements among these definitions. These elements are “connectivity” and “information sharing”. Let's consider some of these definitions: Mbonu (2002) defines The internet as a world- wide network of computers that allows for the transfer of data from one computer to another within the network using common protocol (http, gopher and telnet). Omekwu (2004) quoting some Internet sources has defined the internet as a super-network connecting many smaller networks together and allows all the computers to exchange information with each other. Dictionary of the World Wide Web defines the Internet as world's largest information network; a global web of computer networks and inter-network of many networks all running the TCP/IP protocol.

To further understand the internet, we need to imagine a globe of the world with national boundaries. Then imagine millions of computers within each linked together. Then imagine all the computers in all the countries of the world linked together. That is the internet. Therefore the internet is a global connection of million of computers in a single network. This connection allows people to share information such as data, programmes, pictures and music as well as storage disks. It is a network of networks facilitate communication, The internet has no central management. The only form of management is the internet protocol which entails the signing of internet addresses to the various computers connected to the internet. Every single computer has its own address and internet protocol (IP) number that can be used to locate it. An indispensable and veritable resource of the internet is the World Wide Web (WWW).



## **What is World Wide Web (WWW)?**

Dictionary of the World Wide Web (1980) defines The World Wide Web (WWW) as collection of standard protocol used to access information available on the internet. This information is in form of documents linked together in what is called a *hypermedia system*. Hypermedia is the combined use of (text, image, video, and sound) in a web presentation page. The World Wide Web (WWW) is an extra-ordinary means of effectively publishing and distributing books and other research resources and documents in multimedia capacity. To access information on the WWW, the researcher needs to be familiar with the web site address. A web site address is comprised of 'www' followed by name of the organization, domain name and place. Very important is the domain name.

### **Domain Name**

The domain name is the unique name that identifies an internet site. Domain names have two or more parts usually separated by dot such as www.run.edu.ng (web site of Redeemer's University RUN). Domain Names fall into one of these categories;

- .edu** for educational institution
- .com** for commercial organization
- .mil** for military
- .gov** for governmental organization
- .org** for non-profit organization
- .net** for networking organization
- .int** for international organization

### **The Internet Browser**

A Browser is a software application programme that interprets and displays hypertext mark up language (HTML) documents. It disentangles catches and holds fast information that is pasted on the web. Internet Browsers provide a point and click interface for finding information on a network such as the internet. Mosaic was the first browser introduced in 1993 by the National Centre for super computing applications at University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Today the two most popular Web Browsers are Netscape Communicator and Microsoft Internet Explorer. These browsers combine point-and-click interface designed with open architecture that is capable of integrating other internet tools such as electronic mail, FTP, Gopher, and UseNet news groups. This architecture makes it relatively easy to incorporate images, video, and sound into text documents. Many web pages contain scholarly information

such as journals, proceedings, patents, articles etc. in effect, people, business organizations and research institutions around the world use the internet to access and retrieve information, to communicate and conduct research globally, and access a vast array of services and on-line resources.

### **Online Searching**

Online searching for information can be very fruitful because it connects you to vast resources in distant places that you can access quickly and easily. Before searching the internet for information a researcher needs to have a clear sense of the kinds of information that is available on the internet, how to start looking for information on the Internet, the strategies for internet searching, how to use search engines, the starting place on the web, how to evaluate and cite Internet sources.

### **Research Resources on the Internet**

The Internet has a lot of useful resources for the researcher. And the beauty of it all is that these resources can be accessed from the researcher's office, home and hotel room without having to visit a library. Many of these valuable materials are also current, authoritative and top of the range professional publications. These include:

#### **1. Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)**

The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is an electronic catalogue of a library's holdings. Most OPACs are accessible on the internet. The research fellow can access holdings of Libraries in leading institutions on the globe. He can access materials in the Library of Congress of the United States of America at <http://catalog.loc.gov/>.

#### **2. Online Journal And Magazines**

The need to keep abreast of professional news and development is of vital importance to researchers and the need to access published research results that find their first expression in scholarly/professional journals is indispensable to the work of the researcher. Online magazines and journals are among the information resources available to researchers. A researcher can access specialized or general online databases on the internet. The common practice is for the researcher's institution to subscribe to the databases and then assign a password that enables access to the boundless world of systematized and scientific research information data, report, journals, proceedings conference papers and textual articles in the database. Examples of Online databases accessible on Redeemer's University (RUN) portal as at 2008 include:



- **EBSCO Host Databases**

RUN Library subscribes to EBSCO Host databases to cater for the teaching/learning and research needs of RUN community. In selecting databases, subject covered by each was considered and selections cut across disciplines where RUN offers programmes. The databases subscribed to via EBSCO according to disciplines include:

ASP (Academic Search Premier) – Natural Sciences

BSP (Business Source Premier) – Management Sciences

HIC (Humanities International Complete) – Humanities

LISTA (Library & Information Science & Technology

Abstract) – Librarianship.

Access credentials are as follow:

User id = ns015327

Password = ExJcosR9

- **HINARI**

Health Inter Network Access to Research Information (HINARI) is a free access bibliographic database of major journals from about 70 major biomedical publishers and related social sciences across the globe.

Access profiles using RUN Portal are as follow:

User id = nie091

Password = 75561

- **AGORA**

Access to Global Online Research on Agriculture (AGORA) provides free or low cost access to major scientific journals in Agriculture and related biological, environmental and social sciences. Users can access 918 journals from the World's leading academic publishers. Researchers can log on to AGORA via RUN portal and download relevant full text research articles.

- **AJOL**

African Journal Online (AJOL) is a database of journals published in Africa, covering the full range of academic disciplines. Users can browse through AJOL list and request for articles from journals published outside their native country. AJOL is being funded by African governments to promote communication of research findings to African researchers at less cost. No access credential is requires for AJOL.

- **RSC Journal Archives**

The Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) Journal Archives provides access

to all articles published by the Royal Society of Chemistry (and its forerunner Societies) from 1814 to 1996 since its launch in 2004. Access RSC through RUN portal.

All the databases except the EBSCO ones are free. Highly scholarly articles are published in web journal. Some are free while others are by subscription and others make their table of contents and abstracts available as public domain documents.

### **3. Online Text**

These include reference works, textbooks, reports and conference proceedings with the appropriate connectivity, the researcher can build a useful collection of electronic texts in his personal computer.

### **4. Discussion Groups and Lists**

A number of web discussion lists and groups exist on the internet. With an e-mail address, a researcher can join as many discussion groups as he wants. Joining discussion list/groups enables a researcher to

- a. Get automatic news/information from group members.
- b. Contribute to discussion on topical issues
- c. Ask questions and get reply to clarify concepts and ideas.

### **5. UseNet Groups**

Usenet groups, unlike the lists and groups, are linked by a common e-mail address. Participants use mail address to access the group, contribute to the discussion, which normally covers a range of topics. A researcher can contribute to research topics in a Usenet groups and also benefit from the contributions of others. It provides for cross-fertilization of ideas among professionals on the globe.

### **6. Virtual Libraries**

A Virtual Library sometimes called Electronic Library or Digital Library is a Library without walls where a researcher can conduct research online, submit questionnaire and launch comprehensive searches for full-text of major works in diverse fields of knowledge. It is created by the use of highly sophisticated computer and telecommunication equipment. In virtual libraries, information materials are digitalized, systematized and placed in a retrieval system in remote databases accessible through computers with internet connection. It enables researchers to access multidisciplinary information round-the-clock from his home or office.

The advantages of a Virtual Library over Conventional Libraries:

- It provides round-the-clock access to users



- The information resource content is global; many users in different locations can access the same information the same time.
- The information resource diversity is both print and multimedia.
- The navigational tools are simple but sophisticated.
- Public domain documents can be accessed and printed free of charge
- The information resources are flexible, easily accessed, manipulated and updated.
- The information materials are current.
- Search strategies can be modified or changed

## 7. Government Resources

The Federal government has numerous sites on the internet with quantities of information produced by various government bureaus and agencies, in addition to information produced by legislative proceedings. One could also check for references to appropriate government publications that are available in one's library.

### How to find Information on the internet

#### 1. Search Directories

Search directories are essentially descriptive subject indexes of web sites. They also have searching options. When a researcher connects to a search directory page, he finds a query box for entering keywords. The search engine at these sites searches only for the keyword matches in the database of the directories. Directories are excellent places to begin your search. Some of the best search directories include:

- Yahoo – <http://www.yahoo.com>
- Magellan – <http://www.magellan.mckinle.com>
- Galaxy – <http://www.galaxy.einet.net/galaxy.html>
- Excite – <http://www.excite.com>

#### General Subject Directories include:

- Argus clearing house for subject-oriented internet source guide – <http://www.clearinghouse.net>
- AwesomeList – <http://www.clark.net/pub/journalism/awesome.html>
- Internet public Library – <http://www.ipl.org>
- World Wide Web Virtual Library – <http://vlib.stanford.edu/overview.html>

#### Books Online

The online book page – <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/web/book.html>

Electronic Listserv and Newsgroup: <http://tile.net/lists/usenet>  
<http://www.cis.ohiostate.edu/hypertext/faq/ibngusenet/news/group/top.html>

Journals and Periodicals Online: <http://english.hss.cmu.edu/journals.html>

## 2. Search Engines

A search engine is a programme which when initiated by a search command from a user interface, examines a body of data for items satisfying the criteria and returns the item or their location to the interface. The data could be literary database or information about very large numbers of World-Wide Websites. Search engines are different from directories in that they search World Wide Websites, Usenet Newsgroups, and other internet resources to find matches to the descriptor or keyword. Many search engines rank results according to a degree of relevance most search engines provide options for advanced searching to refine your search. Some of the best search engines include:

- **Google on the Web: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).** Google is a widely used search engine that uses text-matching techniques to find web pages that are important and relevant to a user's search.
- **Yahoo is a search engine, subject directory, and web portal** that has search engine capability and maintains an extensive directory.

Others include:

Alta Vista: <http://altavist.digital.com>

BBC Search: <http://www.bbc.co>

Deja News: <http://www.dejanews.com>

Einet Galaxy: <http://www.einet.net>

Excite: <http://www.excite.com>

Goggle: <http://www.goggle.com>

Hotboot: <http://www.hhotboot.com>

Infoseek Ultra: <http://ultra.infoseek.com>

Lycos: <http://www.lycos.com>

Northern Light: <http://www.nsearch.com>

Open text: <http://www.opentext.com>

Starting point: <http://www.stpt.com>

Webcrawler: <http://www.webcrawler.com>

Yahoo: <http://www.yahoo.com>

## Evaluating Internet Information

Evaluating internet information depends on what one is using the information for. For instance, if one is writing a factual report, dissertation, thesis, or paper that others will rely on for accurate content, it will be



essential that one judiciously selects what information will be useful from the Internet. The following guidelines will assist one in evaluation of Internet information:

- Information sources
- Authorship
- Accuracy
- Verifiability
- Consistency of data
- Quality and
- Currency etc.

### **Conclusion**

As the digital age unfolds, the central challenge for Nigerian higher education is to develop the total intellectual, cultural and creative capacity of the country. A crucial element of this challenge is to ensure that a technology based flexible information delivery system is available to serve the diversity of our university communities, so that all may benefit from the opportunities of the information age. Scholars who are limited to information resources in conventional libraries would be missing out in the highly dynamic and diverse information world. Institutions of education and research that do not provide the appropriate platform for accessing remote information sources and virtual libraries for their scholars would be relegating their scholars to an existence that falls short of human potentials.

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Motivation is a complex concept as well as individualistic in nature. For example, mechanisms and factors that propel Mr. A to action may repulse Mr. B into inertia or inaction. The emphasis points to the fact that motivation is a personal choice in a self-directed manner. The social group and the environment may contribute to what propel us into action but the onus lies on the individual either to act or not.

Lahey (2001) defines motivation as the internal state that activates and gives direction to our thoughts, feelings and action. In the same manner; Plotnik (1997) states that motivation refers to the various psychological and physiological factors that cause us to act in a specific way at a particular time.

Those factors that initiate and propel behaviour could either be Internal (Biological) or External (Environmental) factors. The internal factors that propel human behaviour include needs for food, water and other essential elements for survival, while the external factors include all other incentives such as reward, promotion, recognition or money that propel one to action.