MANAGEMENT OF LOCAL INTERNET CONTENT IN NIGERIAN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is a country in the western part of Africa with many academic institutions and researchers that are making significant investigations on issues affecting the country and the world at large. However, it is unfortunate that research findings in the form of theses, dissertations, technical reports, and other kinds of grey literature gather dust in these academic institutions. This necessitated the focus of this paper, thus making a case for global visibility of the research efforts. It examined the concept of local internet content and discussed best practices to adopt for the collection, preservation and dissemination of the local content emanating from the academic institutions in the country. This is based on three key players – academic institutions, information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, and personnel. It concluded that, as a matter of necessity, Nigeria should put necessary measures in place for showcasing its local content on the web for the furtherance of knowledge and overall development in our global knowledge society.

Keywords: *Management, Local Internet content, Nigerian academic institutions*

Introduction

Academic institutions are power houses of knowledge; a community comprised of teachers and students who come together to pursue excellent academic knowledge and sound life skill. It is the research engine of every society (Iwe, 2010). Distinct from other sectors of life, the academia conserves knowledge, transmits it through teaching, and afterwards creates new knowledge through research. Meanwhile, in the process of creating knowledge, members of the academic community usually neglect some of the resources that should aid their creation of knowledge. A lot of knowledge resources have been left as no man's business.

Professors and other lecturers have left their enduring teaching resources on their office shelves to gather dusts. Some have left their laboratory research papers to the lab cleaner to either preserve it or sweep them away. Albeit, a portion of the academics, who are still in possession of their research articles, are only keeping the copies because of promotion. To others, the field trips they make with their students and all the technical reports they write are worthless. Inventions, prototypes and a lot of other works of knowledge are in isolation in Nigerian academic institutions. These situations have made knowledge pursuit in Nigeria, not costly to acquire, but also subject it to doubt in relation to national development. This scenario reflects the ordeal of local content in Nigeria today.

academic institution...a community comprised of teachers and students who are on a transit to arrive at knowledge through knowledge..

Local content simply refers to indigenous production. It comprises of a community's locally generated, owned and adapted experience and knowledge that is relevant to the people's status quo. Local content provision is an integral part of the development process of local communities. UNESCO's (n.d.) mandate on the Promotion of free flow of ideas by word and image, and the maintenance, increase and spread of knowledge is today contingent on local content available via the local internet. It is on this premise that this paper is focused on management of local internet content in Nigeria academic institutions. Thus, this paper will identify the local internet content in Nigerian academic institutions and discuss best practices to collect, preserve and disseminate them.

**The Concept of Local Internet Content: A Bird's Eye View**
In today's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry, Internet autonomy is vastly commended. The reasons are simple. But before that, it is worthwhile to understand the background to the reasons *vis-à-vis* the education sector. Firstly, UNESCO (n.d) has made it clear that the present day society is transiting from *information* to *knowledge*. Although, to an English scholar, information is synonymous with knowledge, yet it is not so to a knowledge manager or information scientist (librarians). Before now, the global community was an information society meaning that everyone was in search of data in varying fields of life. Data collated is simply called information. But today, the world is a knowledge society; everyone wants to know what has been done or derived from the information collated. The professor who has spent years in finding facts must have eventually come up

with a new knowledge which the world is interested to see and apply. One of the benefits being that duplication of effort in the furtherance of knowledge will be averted. The Internet and digital technologies have transformed how people learn. Educational resources are no longer static and scarce, but adaptable and widely available, allowing educational institutions, teachers, and learners to actively participate in a global exchange of knowledge. Hence, this is a glance of how the global society has gone knowledge-based. Secondly, the world today applauds aggregated forms of dissemination of knowledge. The era of decentralised publishing for academics and institutions is giving way to a centralised form of circulation of knowledge resources. In the case of the education sector, the latter (centralised circulation) is fast promoting quality, quantity and uniqueness of scholarship in individual institutions, making it easy to access them at a glance and thus, has won the chase of concerned stakeholders in the global society.

Thirdly, buy-in to indigenous productions through local channels demonstrates self-reliance and is an indicator of national development (United Nations, 2003). This is another request UNESCO has made on developing countries. A UNESCO paper titled *the need for local content* (n.d) records that, "...content initiatives using ICTs tend to 'push' external content towards local communities". That is to say that the nations who have the ICT facilities easily use and share their knowledge (local content) with those who have not. And the nations who have no ICT facilities cannot share their own knowledge nor find it easy to push out what they have to other nations. So, this is the problem in the sense that: i). the latter nation is unconditionally forced therefore to use what she did not create nor can understand; ii). the latter nation is regarded as dependent and therefore underdeveloped; iii). the same nation, if she must defy odds to share any of her creations on the web, would forfeit its management to the former nation and still stay in isolation. This is to mention but a few predicaments. On the reason why internet autonomy is vastly encouraged, it is simply because the global community, through varying avenues like the governmental and non-governmental organisations, advocates that individual knowledge societies should autonomously showcase their knowledge collection to the global world through their local enabling infrastructure as against hosting of content oversees. Therefore, the support for and the actualisation of this quest is the concept of local internet content.

Management of Local Internet Content in Nigerian Academic Institutions: The Crux

There is no gainsaying that academic institutions everywhere are knowledge creators of which the Nigeria academia is not an exception. Information content in academic institutions in Nigeria which can promote the wealth, rich culture, knowledge strength of the nation includes thesis and dissertations, practical research records, journal articles, well researched project reports, enduring lecture notes, inaugural lecture papers, evaluation reports, technical papers and reports, workshop reports, conference papers, conference proceedings, field trip films and records, inventions and records of community services of academics (Uzuegbu, 2012). As a matter of fact, these are varying types of local content in Nigerian academic institutions which can make good local internet content. Now, as autonomous communities, academic institutions in various parts of the world are setting up digital archives known as *institutional repositories* (IR), for collective holding and sharing of the afore-stated knowledge resources created in her by her staff and students. Evidently, this paradigm has immense benefit to participating institutions and their staff in the sense that their visibility is guaranteed which avails them good ranking among institutions and profile marketability respectively. But, to see to its realisation, three players are involved. They are: the academic institution, ICT infrastructure and personnel.
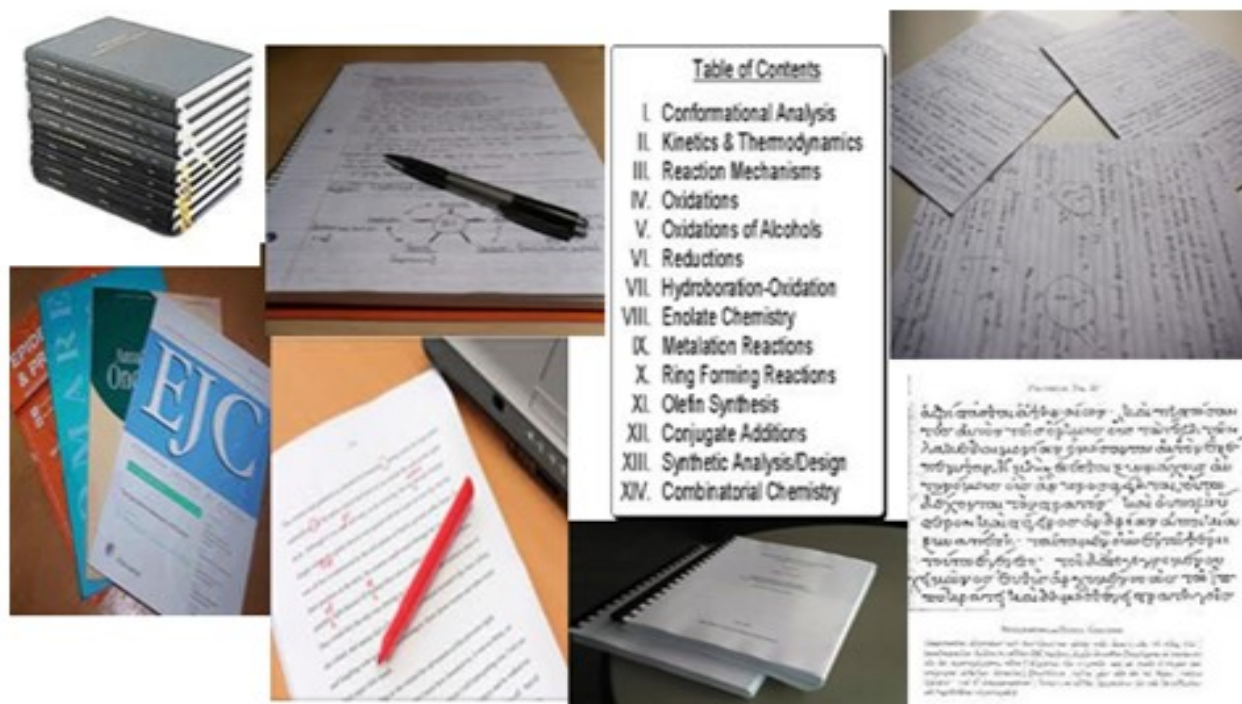
Varying types of local content in Nigerian academic institutions

Academic Institutions

Academic institutions in Nigeria are expected to deal with the issues of policies and advocacy. A model approach may require that each academic institution in Nigeria should establish a local content office overseen by a desk officer who should be a staff of the institution, ideally a librarian. The office shall have its team made up of representatives of each academic Faculty of the institution. Afterwards, Departments comprising each Faculty shall appoint their representatives to represent them at the faculty level of the project. As a matter of fact, institutions can also strategise their academic appraisal and promotion requirements to include evidence of creation and submission of local content to the office in-charge. It may be designed in such a way that for an academic staff to submit his/her appraisal form for assessment, he or she must show evidence of creation and submission of local content emanating from his or her office within the academic period. For instance, contents like enduring lecture notes are regularly created by lecturers and should be submitted every semester. This, among other things, may help check laziness and dormancy towards lecture notes development among academics because an anecdotal investigation reports that most lecturers have used a given lecture note for more than ten years without modification. *Willy-nilly,* academic institutions have got to agree on local internet content creation, advocate for it and collaborate to get it running.

ICT Infrastructure

The Internet is the fastest, far-reaching and reliable means of disseminating local contents anywhere in the world. The provision of ICT infrastructure and its enabling operational environment is the goal of Information Technology (IT) services providers and managers in Nigeria. The International Telecommunication Union (2007) has made it clear that the development of internet and telecommunication services in Africa is an indicator of attainment of the millennium goals and should be a concerted national effort of IT industries in countries of Africa. This is crucially possible if Africans – Nigeria in this case – would host the online services and applications she consumes. Albie Bester, general

manager of a wholesale broadband provider, SEACOM's Cloud Services Subsidiary, Pamoja, has advised that the online services and applications Africans consume be hosted on the continent, and preferably within the borders of the consumer country (http://www.itwebafrica.com/network/333-africa/230539-local-hosting-key-to-africas-cloud-success). Now, a handful of Nigerian academic institutions that have their local content – research articles - already on the internet, via the umbrella of IR, did so through foreign hosts. See Table 1.

Table 1: *Distribution of Local Internet Content (IR) of Some Nigerian Academic Institutions Hosted and Managed Abroad.*

Academic Institution	Host Country
University of Jos	United Kingdom
University of Nigeria Nsukka	United Kingdom
Federal University of Technology Akure	United Kingdom
Covenant University	United Kingdom
Amadu Bello University	United Kingdom

(Information is available at www.opendoar.org and www.doar.org. This two internet archive service providers are owned and managed by United Kingdom institutions).

Meanwhile, the Internet Society for Africa posits that indigenous content hosted in Africa juxtaposed with the ones hosted outside Africa is at the ratio of 20:80. Though there are no available statistics at the moment to show the 20 percent distribution among the African countries involved, it is feared that Nigeria has no contribution at all. Hence, the quest at the moment is to reverse the picture before the year 2015 and the ICT industries in Nigeria have got the technology to do it. The Internet eXchange Point of Nigeria (IXPN) is one of such Nigerian IT industries and is right now at the fore front of local internet content actualisation. According to the Chief Executive Officer, Muhammed Rudman, IXPN is a provider of physical network infrastructure that allows internet exchange of data traffic among respective networks in Nigeria. It is an IT industry which provides the infrastructure and the necessary environment to allow Nigerian networks to interconnect, keep local Internet traffic local, stable and at the same time reliable (http://www.technologytimesng.com/ixpn-nira-in-fresh-drive-to-boost-local-internet-content-in-nigeria/).

Another IT industry that has roles to play towards the actualisation of creation of local Internet content of academic institutions in Nigeria is the Nigerian Internet Registration Association (NIRA). NIRA is a non-governmental and self-regulatory organisation which, as a stakeholder in the promotion of local content on the Internet, is charged with the management of the nation's country code Top Level Domain (.ng ccTLD). They maintain and promote the operational stability and utility of the .ng ccTLD. Furthermore, the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) is not left out. After all, while the nation's success in IT lies on her, the charter of other non-governmental IT industries in Nigeria would be linked to her. Others are the Internet Service Providers in Nigeria, Telecommunications firms and other Internet Protocol based organisations. Having all these, why should knowledge created in Nigerian academic institutions remain invisible or ever outside? No! Suffix to note therefore that collaboration among the IT stakeholders and academic institutions would be more than a far-fetched remedy to the dearth of local Internet content in Nigeria.

Personnel

Personnel issues are factors that must be met technically and professionally. Technically, IT engineers and systems analysts are indispensable members of a realisable local Internet content drive. Professionally, library and information scientists are knowledge content administrators or managers. In developed countries, management of local content, institutional repository and other emerging knowledge bases are in the purview of librarians. So, librarians should be fully deployed to this task for such are the

emerging jobs of library and information professionals in academic institutions. In consequence, the IT personnel will install and run the ICT infrastructure while the library and information professional would analyse, classify and manage the knowledge content. Thus, submission issues, file arrangement, inquiries, and other related issues should be addressed by the managers of the local content.

Management of local content in Nigerian academic institutions … A collaborative effort of academic institutions, the ICT industry and personnel.

Conclusion

Generally, the knowledge society we are into today demands that countries of the world should showcase their local knowledge to the world through their local internet services. Knowledge resources, otherwise known as local content, emanating from academic institutions in Nigeria are vital resources for development and furtherance of knowledge. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of these resources on the Internet and at worst, having them hosted in Nigerian IT infrastructures and platforms. Consequent upon this, IT industries in Nigeria are willing to reverse the situation, first, by advocacy as championed by the Local Internet Content Forum (LICF) in Nigeria. This paper however submits that the advocacy could lead to the creation of a viable local internet content hosted in Nigeria if academic institutions will collaborate with the indigenous IT industries. Hence, while the IT industries provide all IT related services, the academic institutions would see to the implementation of policies and provision of institutional management of the repository.

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