UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

ACCESSIBILITY OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY SERVICES TO DISTANCE LEARNERS: A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF GHANA LIBRARY SYSTEM

BY

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THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE MA INFORMATION STUDIES DEGREE.

JULY 2015
DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this Dissertation is the result of my own original work except references to other people’s works which has been duly acknowledged. And that no part of it has been presented for another degree elsewhere.

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It is not an easy endeavour to undertake an intellectual exercise. It requires cooperation and support from friends, sympathizers and members of family. Indeed the outcome of this study is the result of just that. For this reason I wish to use the opportunity to acknowledge all those whose collaborative efforts contributed to the successful completion of this intellectual exercise.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Lord Jesus Christ, whose faithfulness has brought me this far.

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate the accessibility of academic library services to distance learners, with specific reference to University of Ghana Library System (UGLS). The general objective of the study is to assess the level of awareness and accessibility of library services to distance students. A survey was conducted and one hundred and thirty eight (138) Level 400 distance learning students in the Accra Learning Centre together with University librarian of the University of Ghana were selected by the convenience and purposive sampling methods to collect primary data using questionnaires and interviews respectively. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and thematic analysis are used to analyze the completed questionnaire and interview responses respectively.

The results from the findings revealed that a greater proportion of the respondents were not aware of the library services and programmes. Moreover, it was discovered that most of the subjects acquired their IT training through personal effort other than the University’s. In addition, the study revealed that quite a number of the respondents were at the intermediate level with regard to IT or computer knowledge. Furthermore, distance learners had no remote access to library electronic resources and other databases and therefore did not strongly agree to the provision of their information needs through social media services. It was also evident that information needs of respondents were mostly not provided for adequately. The study recommended the following to the management of the University of Ghana Library System (UGLS); awareness creation of library resources, user education on Information Literacy of library resources and programmes, encouraging the use of social media, training/user education and initiation on borrowing of library resources.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Distance Education (DE) is described as formalized learning received when the student is at a place outside the university campus. Both the lecturer and the student are expected to have minimal physical contact, but rely much on electronic communications (Mabawonku, 2004).

According to Watson (2003), “Distance Education (DE) has revolutionized and democratized the delivery and accessibility of education and has also changed how critical support services, such as library and information service, are provided”. Indeed the present situation poses an implication for libraries, librarians and the university management as a whole. For instance, to academic institutions, library and information services must be accessible to DE students, since this helps in bringing out quality students.

The library is the centre of operations of any learning institution at the same time as it promotes the skill of reading, inquiry and independent thinking through the provision of resources to support teaching and learning activities (Mabawonku, 2004). It normally houses information equipment in a variety of formats such as electronic information sources like CD-ROM, the internet, etc. Library services are essential support services to distance education students. Most researchers in distance learning are in agreement that library support is a key element (Caspers et al., 2001).
Putting in place learning support services to aid significantly the educational curricula is much necessary. Among the many learning support services, Cox (2004) underscored that library services always played a major role in expanding distance learning programs in higher learning institutions. Just as the Library systems provide all type of services to regular students; it is the task of the university libraries to make available equal services to distance learners. Significantly, students from main stream benefit from library services such as borrowing library documentary, locate materials using OPAC, search information using Research and Knowledge Commons facilities. Other services include photocopying services, reference services and bibliographic searches (Cann, 2009; Association of College and Research Libraries - ACRL, 2008).

Taking a cue from the above, the ACRL (2008) identifies that “every student, faculty member, administrator, staff member or any other member of an institution of higher education, is entitled to the library services and resources of that institution, including direct communication with the appropriate library personnel, regardless of where enrolled or where located in affiliation with the institution. Academic libraries must, therefore, meet the information and research needs of all these constituents, wherever they may be. This principle of access entitlement, as applied to individuals at a distance, is the undergirding and uncompromising conviction of the Standards for Distance Learning Library Services”.

Indeed, in Europe and Africa, DE has had an effect not only on the discipline of education, but has also fundamentally affected services that support it (Watson, 2006). But much reliance is on electronic communications” (Mabawonku, 2004). One of the most essential support systems influencing the quality of the courses offered is the provision of library and information services and resources.
Distance learners' prospect of library services as exposed in the literature, exhibit a great need (Niemi, Ehrhard and Neeley, 1998). The library requirements of distant learners are not exceptional; they have the same library and information needs as on campus students (Dugan, 1997; Rodrigues, 1996), but Rowland and Rubbert (2001) in their study on information needs of distant learners’ report that the university libraries did not provide for the specific needs of these students. Aside from the manner in which they are accessed, requested and delivered, the same resources are required, the same questions are asked, and the same quality of service is expected (Rodrigues, 1996); and they expect the same level of library service as that provided to their peers on campus (Riggs, 1997).

Distance learners access library and educational resources and services in diverse ways (Sacchanand, 2002). Access can be direct e.g. face to face, or mediated by printed material, e.g. manuals, brochure, or mediated by technology, using a variety of media such as telephone, radio, the Internet etc. Successful direct access is regarded as by flexibility, reliability, availability, user-friendly, portability, efficiency and service ability (Sacchanand, 2002). Kavulya (2004) in his study of distance education in four universities in Kenya opined that some of the students have little or no exposure to library use and this affects their access to library resources. Effective and appropriate services to distance learning communities may differ from, but must be equivalent to those services offered on a traditional campus (ACRL, 1998).

Supporting the above scenario, Buchanan (2000) concurred that academic libraries can make distance learning either the most pleasant or the most distressing experience for remote students. On the other hand, Thompson (2002) observed that few, if any; campuses have defined a scalable and feasible strategy for making library information
resources available to distance learners. This is at least the path needed to be taken by policy makers or management of tertiary institutions. A twist to the above is a study by Boadi and Letsolo (2004). They found out that majority of distance students (40.3%) make use of the library resources but interestingly the requirement of library and information services in recent times can no longer be considered as a subsidiary activity in DE (Khasseh, et al., 2009). Therefore, the present study explores the promotion of equal access to library materials such as books to distance learners in the higher learning institution, with specific reference to the University of Ghana, Legon.

1.1.1 About UG Distance Education

The initiatives of Ghana Distance Education are not new. The need for this mode of education was to some extent due to the fact that Universities were incapable of admitting even half of applicants due to inadequate infrastructure (Mensah and Owusu-Mensah, 2002).

Speaking at the launch of the programme, Tagoe (2007) revealed that “the values of the programme and admission necessities are correspondent to those as accessible on campus”. He said the programme falls perfectly in line with the University of Ghana’s vision and would be instructed by the Adult Education of the University of Ghana, Legon.

In 1995, the University of Ghana, Legon instituted its space learning programme, but it was not until the year 2007 that it was formerly launched with over 1,000 fresh students admitted into the level 100 to pursue Distance learning programme in Bachelor of Arts and Science which commenced on 1st of December, 2007. For the execution of an ICT Based Distance Education Project, a contract was signed between the University of...
Ghana and the Chinese Company, Unisplendour Software of Tsinghua University, Beijing in April 2010.

After a review of the original project scope, and Value for Money (VFM) Audit, requested by the Ministry of Finance and conducted by Crown Agents of UK, an addendum was signed on behalf of the University of Ghana by the Vice-Chancellor, on 8th October 2012 for the Implementation of Phase 2 of the ICT in Distance Education Project. The project was funded by the Government of Ghana with a Chinese Government Loan procured through the Ministry of Finance on behalf of the Ministry of Education for the University of Ghana, Legon.

The project has deployed for Distance Education Students, an Integrated Digital Mobile Learning Platform which includes 9.7 inch Internet Enabled Android Tablets preloaded with all the Teaching and Learning Materials needed by each student to be given to each Distance Education Student. This is intended to enhance teaching and learning and gradually move away from paper based teaching materials. An eLearning platform, Sakai, has also been deployed as an additional facility.

Currently, courses offered in Distance Education Centre include Faculty of Arts and Social Studies courses with preliminary programmes in Geography, Resource Development, Economics, Sociology, Psychology and Linguistics. Students pursuing such programmes are being provided with study centres, tutoring and counseling, face-to-face session, library services and information sharing computer mediated services. Specifically, each Regional Learning Centre has been provided with a minimum of a fifty (50) seater computer laboratory, a video conference centre connected to the Data
Centre at Legon Campus over the Vodafone National Fiber Backbone, and a Smart Classroom. Additional equipment such as HP LaserJet printers, Scanners, LCD Projectors, Digital Visual Presenter and Photocopiers, UPS, Generator and a centre wide Wi-Fi network (University of Ghana, 2015).

1.1.2 Brief history of UGLS

The University of Ghana Library System (UGLS) includes the main Library (the Balme Library), and all other subsidiary and departmental libraries within the University of Ghana, Legon. These libraries are scattered on the University of Ghana campuses. Together, these libraries enhance and encourage teaching, learning and follow a line of investigation in the university.

Stocks consist of monographs such as serials, magazines, newspapers and pamphlet. Student texts form a large part of the stock. There is a large collection of Africana materials from all parts of Africa. The Balme Library, which is the central library, doubles up as a collection library for World Bank and United Nations as well as Ghanaian publications. The library also has in its possession some CDs, microforms and videos. Academic online databases containing mostly journal articles are currently available mainly through the Consortium of Research and Academic Libraries in Ghana (CARLIGH) (UG Balme Library, 2014).

UGLS has the electronic holdings of the library’s collections, referred to as the OPAC. An Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) is an online folder of materials held by a library or group of libraries. Users seek out a library catalog mostly to locate books and other materials accessible at a library. This means that patrons of the library will have to be computer literate to use and access the collections of the library through the access
points such as author, title, subject and others.

1.2 Problem of Research

DE is gaining popularity at a faster rate now than ever before. It is seen to be more flexible or open to a larger number of learners. It virtually removes all physical barriers to education due to the availability of student support services. Some of these barriers include high residential costs, regular classes and student isolation (Garten and Williams, 2006). A similar view is held by Johnson and Jent (2005), that without student support services, distance students are likely to drop out due to difficulties such as financial costs of study, disruption of family life, and perceived irrelevance of their studies and lack of support from employers.

Academic libraries are established to offer library services to faculty, students and other interested stakeholders. Some studies (Owusu-Ansah, 2010; Cann, 2009) in the Ghanaian context have found that not enough attention has been given to the utmost utilization of the library by distance learning students. It appears from close scrutiny in UG, Legon that, the UGLS provides just a little support to students on the Distance Learning programs; making it very difficult for accessibility of the library’s collections.

As is usually done for main campus students, it is uncertain whether library orientation is organized by the University of Ghana Library System for distance learners. Between UGLS and the Institute of Distance Learning and Continuing Education, it appears to be diminutive partnership as confirmed by the Coordinator of the Institute. The effect of this is that distance learners who enroll on the program may graduate from the UG, Legon without tapping into the library resources. Especially when the UGLS has
progressed into an online mode, distance learners who have little or no computer skills in accessing library resources would face much difficulty.

Geographical isolation has been identified as one of the major problems for distance students (Garten and Williams, 2006). In addition to the practical challenges of contacting academic and administrative staff, obtaining study materials and borrowing library books, distance students suffer from the disadvantage of being unable to interact with library staff/personnel. This may lead to feelings of inadequacy, insecurity and lack of confidence in their academic pursuit. It is against this background that the researcher explores the level of accessibility of academic library services to distance learners.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the accessibility of academic library services to distance learners, with specific reference to UGLS

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. evaluate the level of consciousness of library services offered by the University of Ghana Library System to distance learners.

ii. investigate the library services and programmes offered to distance learners.

iii. discover the level of IT or computer knowledge of DL students in accessing the UGLS.
iv. ascertain to what extent distance learners are capable of accessing the library e-resources and other databases (remote access).

v. ascertain whether the information needs of distance learners are adequately provided for.

vi. assess the challenges faced by the distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System.

vii. make recommendations to both library management and policy makers of the University of Ghana, Legon.

1.5 Research Questions

i. What is the level of consciousness of library services available at University of Ghana Library System by distance learners?

ii. What are the library services and programmes available to University of Ghana distance learners?

iii. What is the level of IT or computer knowledge of DL students in accessing the UGLS?

iv. To what extent can distance learners access library e-resources?

v. How are the information needs of distance learners provided for?

vi. What challenges do distance learners face in accessing library services at University of Ghana Library System?
1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted at the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education (UG, Legon). The confinement of the study was limited to the Accra Learning Centre. The Accra Learning Centre was selected over the other nine (9) Centers because tutorials are held on the City campus. This gave the researcher ample time to complete the research.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework adopted for this study is the Standards for Distance Learning Library Service developed by Association of College and Research Library (ACRL) (2008). The framework is a concept which postulates that every higher learning institution must have a library for students, faculty members, staff and administrators of that institution. Students should be able to have the right to use resources and services of the library irrespective of their location.

The framework aligns most closely with the purpose of this study as compared to theories in DE. The constructs identified in the Philosophy of the Standards for the framework are as follows: Access, Support and Information Literacy and these are relevant to the context of this study.

1.7.1 Access for achievement of superior academic skills

Effective and appropriate library services and resources should be made available to students of the distance learning community. ACRL (2008), defines distance learning community as all individuals (students, staff, faculty, researchers, administrators and institution) directly involved with academic courses and programs offered further than the main campus or in the absence of traditional campus. Library services provided to
distance learning student should be practically the same as those available for students in traditional campus settings regardless of their location.

This implies that distance learning students of University of Ghana are expected to have access to library materials, library electronic resources and other databases such as Emerald, JSTOR, and Science Direct among others. These would be essential for the attainment of higher academic skills in the university (ACRL, 2008).

1.7.2 Mandate Support

According to ACRL (2008), institutions must make available funds and appropriately meet up the information needs of its distance learning programs in order to support teaching, learning and research. This support should provide ready and corresponding library services and resources to distance learners. Tertiary institutions libraries and the librarian- administrator should conduct information need assessment on distance student to be able to know their information needs. This will help the library to provide adequate and appropriate information resource to satisfy their information need of distance learning students.

1.7.3 Information Literacy

Libraries should provide Information Literacy programs such as user education and IT skills to the user learning community as stated by ACRL (2008) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. According to them, Information Literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information. Boylston (2015) restates that Information Literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and
participating ethically in communities of learning. This implies that distance learners of
the University of Ghana should be given adequate Information Literacy skills in order to
be able to locate, evaluate and use information effectively.

1.8 Significance of the study

The present study is of significance to the following groups: policy makers, professionals/ practitioners, researchers and academia.

The result of the findings of this study would hopefully provide feedback on policies for
diffusion of UGLS services in distance learning programmes. In this sense, appropriate
library systems could be designed and put in place to support distance learners in the
University of Ghana, Legon. Also, the findings will add to studies that have being done,
so that people in other tertiary institutions can also appreciate the problem.

Moreover, the final report will be a useful source of reference to professionals, other
future researchers, academia and policy makers since it will serve as an input for policy
formulation to regulate them on the accessibility of academic library services to distance
learners.

Research on accessibility of academic library services to distance learners is very limited
concerning library and information studies. It is also hoped that the results from the study
would fill the knowledge gap in the literature on accessibility of academic library
services to distance learners, particularly in the Ghanaian context.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the pool of knowledge and practice on DE and
accessibility of academic library services. The findings and recommendations would
serve as benchmark for improving the learning environment of the distance learner and a secondary source of information to other researchers.

1.9 Limitations

The challenges faced in conducting this study were;

i. The study could not cover the entire distance learning population or distance learners of the Accra Learning Center as a result of time constraint and this led to the selection of Level 400 distance learning students of the University of Ghana.

ii. The survey approach was carried out at the Accra Learning Center and could not cover all university campuses, in order to reflect the entire industry response on the accessibility of academic library services to distance learners, with specific reference to UGLS.

iii. The major difficulty encountered in this research was the collection of data from students and the University Librarian. As usual, respondents were reluctant to answer the questionnaire and respond to interview questions for tight schedule. Therefore, this affected the response rate. Hence the result was not generalized but its findings were placed in the relevant context of the educational institution studied.

1.11 Organization of the study

The organization of the research was as follows:

Chapter One (1): Introduction

This chapter provided a basis for the research by giving an overview of the background, the problem statement, research purpose, the research objectives, the research questions,
conceptual framework, significance, scope, limitation, and the organization of the research.

Chapter Two (2): Literature Review

Literature on the accessibility of academic library services to distance learners was reviewed. The themes covered concepts of distance education and academic libraries, accessibility of library services in distance education and library services/programmes. As a matter of fact, the literature review served as a springboard for the determination of the contextual framework of the research.

Chapter Three (3): Research Methodology

This chapter described the research methodology adopted which included research design, population, sample size and sampling instrumentation and data collection procedure and development of data collection instruments. Data preparation and thematic and descriptive analysis procedures was also covered in this section.

Chapter Four (4): Discussion of Findings

This chapter discussed the findings obtained from data collected with respect to the literature reviewed.

Chapter Five (5): Summary, Conclusions and Recommendation

The final chapter presented a summary of principal findings, recommendation and conclusion, limitations of the study, and contributions made. Implications for managerial practice and recommendations for future research were as well highlighted in this section.
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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature. Creswell (2009) explained that literature review provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing results with other findings. In the view of Creedy (2008) literature review aims at placing the study clearly within a larger context.

The literature review is important because: It describes how the proposed research is related to prior research in statistics. It shows the originality and relevance of your research problem. Specifically, the research is different from other statisticians. It justifies your proposed methodology. It demonstrates your preparedness to complete the research (Creedy, 2008).

The main themes in this section include; definition of concepts, library services and distance learning, distance learning and the library environment, and accessibility of library resources. The chapter ends with a summary of the review.

2.2 Definition of Concepts

2.2.1 Distance Learning

With the tremendous growth of online distance education programs, it is easily forgotten that the concept of learning “anytime anywhere” is not a new one. Distance learning, in form of correspondence or home study, reaches back over 250 years (Schmetzke, 2001). ‘Distance education or distance learning, is a mode of delivering education and instruction, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a
traditional setting such as a classroom’ (Sekyi, 2013). Distance learning has gone through massive changes since the advent of the personal computer and more recently the prevalence of the Internet. During the 90’s there were increased interest in distance learning using personal computers and computer networks that connect them. Although there are many colleges and universities that have offered distance learning programs for years, there is a rapidly growing need to provide instruction and services to learners anytime anywhere in a virtual environment (Gu, 2006). Providing a distance learner with academic services through telecommunications media should give the distance learner the same advantages and privileges that a traditional on-campus learner has always received.

This increased interest and involvement in distance learning among higher education institutions may continue to grow. This area is being fueled by three major factors: 1) institutions are looking to increase enrollment by attracting non-resident students; 2) there are growing needs of adult learners to acquire new skills and college credits while overcoming the constraints of time and distance; and 3) the development of new technologies are making the delivery of distance learning courses more attractive (Garrison and Shale, 2006). As high-speed transmission systems (cable modems ...) will deliver high bandwidth to residential homes, applications requiring high data rate transfers for voice and video will be possible. The applications that will be used to deliver instruction and provide services are likely to improve over time, opening up the range of possible courses and services offered on-line and accessed by the learner (Rowland and Rubbert, 2001).

Distance learning can take many different forms, ranging from mailed printed materials to desktop videoconferencing. A large number of past literatures discuss the different
modes of distance learning and their effectiveness. As the focus of this study is not on the examination of different delivery methods, but presenting a comprehensive model of online distance education (i.e., the provision of a learning environment that utilizes computer networks to a large extent), the effectiveness of different educational delivery systems is not addressed here (Moore, 2009).

‘Distance learning is an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner’ (Perraton and Creed, 2000). ‘The term ‘distance learning’ covers the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization.’ (Holmberg, 2007) “Distance learning is all arrangements for providing instruction through print or electronic communications media to persons engaged in planned learning in a place or time different from that of the instructor or instructors”

From the perspective of many educational technologists, distance learning is inexorably linked to technology. According to Garrison and Shale (2006) distance learning involves non-contiguous communication between students and teachers mediated by print or some form of technology. Recent developments in technology are believed to be removing some of the disadvantages associated with distance education. Bates (2005) suggests that new technologies promise a wider range of teaching functions and a higher quality of learning, lower costs, greater student control, more interaction and feedback for students.

It is important to clarify what distance education is not. This becomes necessary as the term is used interchangeably with what it is not. For instance, Asabre-Ameyaw (2008)
posits that there has existed for a long time opposing views of interchanging the word distance education with that of Open University. Even though Holmberg and others try to explain these concepts, the confusion still persists. For Holmberg (2001), distance learning is not open learning because the latter implies forms of study which refrain from all avoidable restrictions as to access, study time and methods. Bampo (2008) supports this view, by explaining that even though all open learning (even on site) involves some degree of distance learning, not all distance learning involves much openness.

It can be noticed that when the various definitions of distance education are examined, certain similarities arise and these are part of what Keegan (1996) identifies as the five main characteristics of Distance Learning listed below:

i. The partly detached situation of teacher and student throughout in the educational process;
ii. The conscious efforts made by DE institutions in supporting teaching and learning at a distance;
iii. The usage of technologically based interventions such as print, audio, video or computer in bridging the distance gap between teacher and student and thereby enhancing the educational process;
iv. The facility of cooperative communication that helps students to interact more easily with teachers despite separation by distance usually via feedback on assignments etc;
2.2.2 Library Services

The library is the nerve centre of any educational institution as it promotes the acquisition of reading, inquiry and independent thinking through the provision of resources to support teaching and learning activities (Mabawonku, 2004). It normally houses information materials in various formats such as electronic information sources like CD-ROM, the internet, etc. Library services are essential support services to distance education students. Most researchers in distance learning are in agreement that library support is a key element (Caspers, Fritts and Gover, 2001).

Distance learners' expectations of library services as revealed in the literature, demonstrate a great need (Niemi, Ehrhard and Neeley, 2008). The library needs of distant learners are not unique; they have the same library and information needs as on campus students (Liu, & Yang, 2004), but Rowland and Rubbert (2001) in their study on information needs of distant learners reported that the university libraries did not cater for the specific needs of these students. Apart from the manner in which they are accessed, requested and delivered, the same resources are required, the same questions are asked, and the same quality of service is expected (Rodrigues 1996); and they expect the same level of library service as that provided to their peers on campus (Riggs, 1997).

Distance learners access library and educational resources and services in various ways (Sacchanand, 2002). Access can be direct e.g. face to face, or mediated by printed material, e.g. manuals, brochure, or mediated by technology, using a variety of media such as telephone, radio, the Internet etc. Successful direct access is characterized by flexibility, reliability, availability, user-friendly, portability, efficiency and service ability (Sacchanand, 2002). Kavulya (2004) in his study of distance education in four
universities in Kenya opined that some of the students have little or no exposure to library use and this affects their access to library resources. Effective and appropriate services to distance learning communities may differ from, but must be equivalent to those services offered on a traditional campus (ACRL, 1998).

According to Molefi (2008), support services in Distance Learning are the systems or procedures that are purposefully created and effectively utilised by a learning institution to support and or facilitate teaching and learning at a distance. Tong (1994) also regards support services as essential in helping students overcome difficulties that affect the quality of their academic work. This gives students the confidence that they are not being left on their own but the institution is interested in their progress. Mirtz (2010) views student support as more overreaching involving the ‘entire setting in which learning takes place…the disciplines that provide the knowledge learning support, the learners and the arrangements made for them, the teaching and learning process, and the assessment of learning, institution and programs’.

Conversely, one can argue that student and learning support could be used interchangeably. Thus, student support is generally viewed in two components comprising of academic support and non-academic support with an objective to help learners learn successfully (Simpson, 2002). Learning support on the other hand is more learning specific. It refers to support systems intended to enhance and improve learning. The principal objective of learning support is to produce distance learners who are able to progress through their programmes learning successfully, able to be independent learners who have good learning skills and strategies, and able to interact effectively with tutors, learning materials and other learners at any time.
To Wright (2009), support services is the “requisite students’ services essential to ensure successful learning at a distance”. The most important student support services which must be provided at a distance study centre according include: provision of library services, motivation of students to continue their education, evaluation of assignments, provision of feedback to students, provision of counselling services to learners and the provision of quality learning materials.

The Quality Assurance Agency, QAA (2009) for higher education also identifies material-based learning which implies that all learning materials should be made available to distance learners on time. These range from printed, audio or audio visual material and experiment equipment. Learning must be supported locally.

Tait (2003) identifies three roles that support services in DE play: first, support services encourage the cognitive (learning) development of students; secondly, support enhances the self-esteem of students therefore building their confidence; thirdly, support for students is systematic in helping students meet the required standard expected of them so that they do not fall behind or redraw from school. Notwithstanding the above views, this study seeks to present library services and support for DE students.

2.3 Library services and Distance Learning

In recent years, the role of the library in distance learning has expanded in Africa and beyond. According to Latham, Slade and Budnick (2006) library support for distance learning has been of concern to librarians. For instance, a recent bibliography on library services for open and distance learning identifies 764 works written in the middle to late 1990s (Slade and Kascus, 2005). Studies in ‘Library services and Distance Learning’ is significant because of the degree the changing role of the library at the end of the
twentieth century and the convergence of on- and off-campus library services as the electronic era blurs the boundaries between conventional and distance education and between remote and in-person users of libraries.

As reported by Association of College & Research Libraries - ACRL (2008) guidelines, distance learning community are entitled to library services and resources equivalent to those provided for students and faculty in traditional campus settings. The guidelines very clearly state that the traditional on campus library services themselves could not be stretched to meet the library needs of distance learning students and faculty who face distinct and different challenges involving library access and information delivery. Special funding arrangements, proactive planning and promotion are necessary to deliver equivalent library services and to achieve equivalent results in teaching and learning and generally to maintain quality in distance learning programmes.

Similarly Illinois Library Association (ILA) (2002) ‘Guidelines for Library Services to Distance Learners’ have argued that traditional library services designed for on-campus users will not meet the requirements of distance learners. The impact and significance of distance learning is fittingly described by Howard (2005) when she states that “distance education has led to a redefinition of what is common in education”. Professions, including librarianship, that are associated with distance education have also experienced a redefinition. The effect of distance education on support services has been so profound that the phrase “growth industry” is applied by Cullen (2004) to the changes that have occurred in these activities. Librarianship has grown and changed in many aspects because of the different approaches that have to be taken to provide library and information services to those who learn at a distance. These changes have impacted not
only on the delivery of library and information services to those who learn at a distance but also on the delivery of library services to other clients. Thus, these changes have led to the development of new professional paradigms within the field of librarianship.

Librarians struggle with the challenge of providing support to distance learners that is equitable to library services available on campus, there is an increased awareness of the need for research studies to provide a knowledge base for the development of best practices (Abubakar, 2010). With the emergence of networked access and web connectivity, libraries in higher learning institutions have the potential to make options available to distance learners in terms of online catalogue access, online database searching, full text retrieval, remote reference and instruction, electronic communication, and document delivery. The development of a strong research base will help librarians reach consensus on the essential criteria to use in measuring performance and documenting good practice in these areas.

Generally speaking, the emphasis in the literature on library services for distance learning has shifted dramatically in recent years from access to physical libraries and print materials to access to electronic libraries and electronic resources. Off-campus library services in London have been discussed (Tait, 2003). Tait found out that developing appropriate collections in various disciplines to meet the needs of the clientele of the libraries, providing reading, lending, reference, information and documentation facilities to all categories of staff and students; developing a special collection of distance education books and journals at the libraries, circulation service including inter library loan, reference & referral, user guidance, bibliographies/indexes,

2.4 Distance Learning and the Library Environment

Bunker (2000) argued that distance learning in its various forms has a long history within postsecondary education, and has had incredible growth since 1990s. This growth is due to a number of factors, the primary ones being the rapid development of information and communications technologies (ICT), increasing use of the Internet and World Wide Web for the delivery of educational programs, and expanding access to information in electronic format.

In the Library environment, libraries are faced with a much more complex operating environment and many competing needs. The environment is viewed as the type of environment which library users interact with either for purposes of accessing or obtaining information for academic purposes or to perform a task. In this context of this study, distance learning or education is viewed as that task (Molefi, 2008). Conversely, in the higher learning institutions, the Library environment can be referred to the context in which information is sourced, accessed, managed, utilised and generally made available for the use of distance learners in pursuit of their distance learning programmes. The sources and/or channels of information comprise colleagues or friends, mass-media such as radio and television and newspapers, library and electronic mediated devices such as the Internet, among others.

Some attempts have been made to explain or substantiate on the information needs of distance learners. Jagannathan (2008) categorises information requirements of distance students into three; need for materials and facilities: Distance learners need several kinds of materials such as reference books, texts books, journals, reports, self-instructional
materials (SIMs) etc. They require various facilities through the library reading room as well as stack room space with proper display of documents. Secondly, need for information services: such as bibliographic instruction for print and non-print materials; information about distance learning agencies, and support services. Thirdly, need for user services: distance learners also need professional guidance and support from the library staff about using library collection, using equipment and facilities available at the library (Jagannathan, 2008).

In identifying specific information requirement of distance students, an empirical study by Kascus and Aguilar (2008) found out that the information needs of distance learners included access to adequate facilities; core collections; professional library staff; reserve reading collections; and supplementary materials. Singh (2002) also argues that distance learners generally need some types of information services, namely the loan of a specific book/reference book usually one referred to in their SIMs; a photocopying; information/material on a particular subject; self-instructional materials; viewing and listening to audio-visual materials; using the different type of library collection and using equipment and facilities available.

2.5 Accessibility of Library Resources

Distance learning has made remarkable progress over the last two decades and has now gained widespread acceptance as a viable alternative learning delivery system (Rao, 2006). Distance learning has had effect not only on the discipline of education, but it has also fundamentally affected services that support it (Watson, 2006). One of the most essential support systems influencing the quality of the courses offered in distance education is the provision of library and information services and resources. Most
researchers in distance learning are in agreement that library support is a key element (Copers et al., 2001).

The provision of quality library services to those who learn at a distance is undoubtedly one of the most exciting and challenging developments that have occurred in contemporary librarianship (Egberongbe, 2011). Distance education has led to the development of specialised library and information services that can appropriately be called distance librarianship. The genesis of distance librarianship is grounded in the creation of the large-scale spread of distance education to satisfy personal and national educational goals. Distance education has impacted not only on the discipline of education, but it has also fundamentally affected services and professions that support distance learning and distance education.

It is important that Distance learners are able to access institution library resources in a timely and convenient way (Heaps, 2001). Benefits of the ubiquitous use of technology have been recognised by academic librarians, both in the provision of services and accessing resources, with movement away from print collections towards increased provision of remote access to e-resources within virtual libraries. This has been enabled by the existence of seamless and improved functionality of interfaces, such as new resource discovery software (Bower & Mee, 2010). This benefits all users, but in particular DLs who need to access library resources from home or work (Hensley & Miller, 2010). Access to licensed e-journals and e-books has not completely removed the need for physical access via postal loan services, inter-library loans (ILLs), and document delivery services (possibly delivered electronically direct to users) (Bower & Mee, 2010).
The way that libraries manage postal loan services to distance learners vary, particularly in relation to charging for postage. Libraries can either charge for return postage or for postage both ways for items sent to DL students, or levy an additional charge on top of postage costs (Long, 2009; Hitchen, 2005). Issues for libraries in providing a postal library service are mainly budgetary decisions relating to the expense of postal loans, the length of delivery times, and problems with the collection of deliveries by users. Some libraries set limits on the minimum and maximum physical distance students must live away from the institution to be eligible for postal loans (Long, 2009), resulting in the service rarely being provided to overseas students (Hitchen, 2005).

Document delivery, whether this is done by post or electronically, is often the responsibility of an ILLs department. Document delivery is especially useful if library resources are available only in print. For example, the British Library document supply service enables documents to be sent directly to the end user (British Library, 2011). The ability to provide electronic versions of documents means that they can be delivered in a timely and simple way over the Internet. However, since suppliers often add a copyright clearance fee, it can sometimes be cheaper to simply purchase a hard copy back issue of a journal needed by a distance learner (Kramer, 2010).

The third way in which distance learners may obtain physical library resources is through ILL services. Bower & Mee (2010) state that historically, material was initially made available to distance learners by the library via ILL and document delivery with no specialized services. However, this was subsequently replaced with an electronic document delivery service direct to user accounts.
For the library to be effective as an instrument of learning, it must provide users with the required information. Traditionally the library’s effectiveness was measured in relation to completeness and balance of collection, the adequacy of acquisitions, cataloguing etc.

In recent times, the focus has shifted towards the other end of the knowledge communication process: the users. With the advent of online catalogues, online databases, other electronic resources (CD-ROM), access to information and new methods of document delivery, the role of the academic library is changing.

Users do not have to be physically present in the library in order to access the library’s resources. The changing role of academic librarians as knowledge managers emphasizes the need to constantly update or acquire new skills and knowledge to remain relevant in today’s library environment (Dadzie, 2005).

Students must be made aware of these support services if they are to fully benefit from them (Long, 2009), because there is a real difference between accessibility and availability (Holloway, 2008: 289). Similarly, librarians should encourage DLs to request resources early, leaving plenty of time before assignments are due, to prevent them arriving too late to be useful (Long, 2009).

Given the emergence of distance learning, institutions of higher education both in Africa and beyond must reflect on whether and how they are meeting the needs of today’s distance student. As often as not, students in higher education are commuting to school or taking courses at a distance, challenging the status quo of the traditional residential student. Access to adequate library services and resources is essential in post-secondary education, regardless of where students, faculty, and programs are located (Koohang,
The library can make distance learning either the most pleasant or the most distressing experience for remote students (Buchanan, 2000).

In other words, library is the key to an institution’s academic strengths; it is the heart and soul of the learning process, and “perhaps the greatest obstacle to create a complex and comprehensive set of distributed learning offerings in meeting the information needs of students in an electronic medium” (Thompson, 2002). Although many consider the library to be the heart of the university, the use of the library is often not incorporated into distance learning courses (Lebowitz, 1997). Few, if any, campuses have defined a scalable and viable strategy for making library information resources available to distance learners (Thompson, 2002).

In order to provide quality library and information services for distance learners, it is essential for the institution to have a philosophy that recognizes the provision of library services to their students as a primary responsibility. Most of the institutions in Africa do not provide sufficient support for distance learning students to pursue their courses successfully, particularly when it comes to students’ information needs. To provide students with the resources they need in a timely and efficient manner, studies need to be conducted to examine user requirements, preferences and technological abilities (Aliakbar, Hadi and Jowkar, 2009).

The delivery of library and information services to distance learners is undisputedly the most pressing challenge that distance librarians encounter. Distance librarianship demands that libraries and librarians recognise that their role has transformed from being custodial in orientation to become cutting edge in nature particularly with respect to the delivery of information services. Distance education and librarianship demands that students are placed at the centre of the educational paradigm (Shija, 2009). There must
be a shift from institutional centred programmes and activities to a focus that centres on strategies to help the student overcome the array of challenges caused by distance and temporal factors. Flexibility must be a cardinal parameter. Distance students must have the ability to access library and information resources when, where and how they choose.

Store (1998) reports that there is the need for librarians to be “responsive and innovative” in order to meet the library and information needs of its students. He sees distance education as introducing a new marketplace into the profession. In addition to traditional delivery mechanisms libraries must introduce bold and innovative strategies into their delivery process. Egberongbe (2011) reveals that the strategies must be deployed to deliver the gamut of services that distance learners require including document delivery; bibliographic instruction; Information Literacy instruction; reference services; interlibrary loans and access to electronic resources.

In traditional librarianship information seekers go to an information service point to access the information they need. In distance services the information has to be sent to the student. Allied to this factor is the need to have an expeditious document delivery service. Time and distance are real foes when distance students try to access information (Damilola, 2013). The institution of procedures and channels to get information to students quickly must be an important aspect of distance librarianship. Another new feature of distance library services is the creation of Research Assistants and others who act as intermediaries between the information seeker and the information source. The existence of intermediaries who link the information source and the information seeker represents a new professional paradigm in librarianship (Kwafoa, Imoro and Afful-Arthur, 2014).
In order to bridge the gap between the information source and the information seeker it is necessary to use a variety of delivery strategies to take the information to the student. The use of technology features heavily in this regard, particularly in developed countries. The use of OPACs, on-line systems and services, networked databases and other information providers as well as other technologically dependent information services are found in many distance education library and information services in these countries (Sharma, 2009). The low cost of technology, cheap communications charges and widespread access to these facilities makes the deployment of technological based information services an important modality to provide access to information in distance learning. Once these systems of information transfer are available for distance learners it makes it possible to extend their use to on-campus teaching and learning thereby introducing new paradigms in information delivery in library services (Damilola, 2013).

For traditional library services, students do go to the library to access the range of information services that they need to satisfy their learning needs. However, in distance education some modalities have to be used to take library services to distance learners. Thus, the tyranny of distance applies not only to education but also to the ability of those who study at distance to access library services (Mabawonku, 2004).

Librarians, distance educators and administrators must therefore adopt new strategies to ensure that quality library and information services are available to those who learn at a distance. These new strategies or paradigms must be applied to every aspect of library and information services. Thus, distance librarianship has wrought a change in what is “common” in librarianship through the introduction of a number of qualitative changes in library and information services (Sacchanand, 2002). The findings by Kavulya (2004)
in four universities in Kenya revealed that access to library resources could be direct e.g. face to face or mediated by printed material e.g. manuals, brochure, or mediated by technology, using a variety of media such as telephone, radio, the Internet etc. however, successful direct access is characterized by flexibility, reliability, availability, user-friendly, portability, efficiency and service ability. Thus, Kavulya (2004) opined that some of the DE students have little or no exposure to library use and this affects their access to library resources.

2.5.1 Problems in Accessing DL Information Resources

In universities, some challenges appear to hinder distance learners in accessing library resources and electronic resources. Among most studies (Tripathi and Jeevan, 2008; Mirza & Mahmood, 2012; Kwafioa et al., 2014), challenges identified include geographic barriers, technological barriers, budgetary and staffing restraints, lack of awareness for library resources and services, lack of Information Literacy, problem of interlibrary loan and document delivery and acquisition and collection development issues.

Geographical barriers were also a problem DL students faced in accessing information resources. The distance learners are dispersed along the length and breadth of the country. A study by Tripathi and Jeevan (2008) showed significant findings such as the inability of distance learners to access library resource. The study however recommended that to close the distance gap, stakeholders need to provide equitable information access to distance learners at par with campus based learners. On the other hand, Tripathi and Jeevan (2008) underscored DL libraries should concentrate on fulfilling the information needs and requirements by exploring modern information
technologies, developing library networks and negotiating with information providers to strike better learner friendly licensing and access models.

Another barrier is technological barrier. In DE, slow access to the Internet as a result of the bandwidth limitation or usage of old systems/technologies comprise of technological barrier. Especially in Africa, the bandwidth limitations of the internet make information resources difficult to be accessed by users. As stated by Barnhart & Stanfield (2011) technology has an essential role to play in enabling education to be accessed from anywhere and at anytime, thereby helping to mitigate against the afore mentioned difficulties. A survey by Bryne & Bates (2009) corroborated the findings in the earlier study by stating that technological innovations would enable librarians to provide DLs with the same level of access to resources and services as on-campus students, as well as the knowledge necessary to find the information they need.

Since the students of DE are remotely located and geographically dispersed with uneven technology penetration; the challenge lies in using appropriate information technology tool which is commonly available and relatively economical. This is why earlier studies (Hensley & Miller, 2010; Whitehair, 2010) have suggested that the perception of librarians that isolation is a significant challenge for DL students is correct and strategies to overcome this are needed. The literature states that by embedding librarians within Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), using discussion boards and other innovative uses of technology, can not only support Information Literacy training, but also, to a certain extent, remove the sense of isolation felt by DL students.

Lack of awareness of library resources and services appears to be a barrier to accessing library resources. Brooke (2011) conducted a study in UK University (Sheffield Hallam
University - SHU) to identify the reasons for the lack of use of library resources. Using a questionnaire as a collection instrument, data gathered revealed that the Distance Learners at SHU had reasons for not using the library resources, among them are lack of awareness of the services offered. Khan and Shafique (2011) identified Information Literacy as a remedy to resolving lack of awareness. According to Abubakar (2010) Information Literacy is the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyse, and use information. Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand. It has been observed that the distance learners do not know how to access the online resources; so the information resources remain under-utilized.

Cohen & Burkhardt (2010) underscored that budgetary and staffing restraints are familiar to all libraries and librarians not just the ones who serve distance learners. It seems that libraries are constantly fighting stagnant or decreasing budgets. An empirical study by Whitehair (2010) supported the view of Cohen & Burkhardt (2010) that library services are expensive since it requires an addition of staff or revision to current services. For instance buying software, staffing electronic reference services, mailing books and articles are going to be added costs to the operational budget of the library. Thus, enough funds from stakeholders need to be provided for running efficient DE programme.

Delivery of material is often a complicated issue; it is an important part of providing equitable service to distance learners. It is another issue which requires lot of judicious
planning and decision making. The distance learners who are remotely located may identify relevant library material that they need, but could not obtain the full text online. Librarians have to decide what their policies and procedures will be for request and delivery of, articles or books. The librarians have to decide how articles both owned and loaned through interlibrary loan must be sent—through-mail, fax or electronically. Delivery of books is often a trickier decision for a library. Copyright is a grave issue and what comprises infringement of copyright and fair use regarding electronic storage and transmission of print or images is still not crystal clear. Articles can be scanned and sent as images files to the distance learners. But copyright restrictions are a barrier to scanning and sending books.

There are two categories of learners who currently get enrolled in the distance learning stream, one is those who wish to pursue learning with earning by working in part-time or full-time jobs, there are also large number of learners who do not get admission in the regular stream. Sometimes these learners may not grasp the content of international publications which are primarily available in electronic form.

2.5.2 ICT and Library services in Distance Learning

According to Burge, Snow and Howard (2008) the impact of ICT on library services to distances places librarians and other distance education providers in a new era and in unmapped territory. Consequently, she sees all those involved in distance education as pioneers. Burge et al. (2008) describe the involvement of library staff in the development of new courses.

The convergence of technology and communications offers distance education institutions an array of options to deliver library and information services (Igun, 2005). The expanded use and role of technology in the delivery of library and information
services has served to reduce the barriers to library and information services that are occasioned by distance for these students. In order to take library services to distance learners many libraries in these institutions have placed most of their services on-line. Liu (2005) posits that the digitalisation of information makes it possible to take library and information services to distance students regardless of their location. In addition to OPACs, students are able to search databases, examine abstracts and in some instances read full text documents. Some of these networked services also include non-print resources in their information data bases.

Another use of technology to provide library and information services in distance learning are the delivery of Information Literacy, bibliographic instruction and reference skills as on-line courses (Igun & Adogbeji, 2007). Thus, distance students are able, through technology, to enjoy training in information related skills through the use of technology. Many libraries use electronic communication as the medium of choice to maintain contact with students making it possible for students to use e-mail as a means of sending and receiving communication related to their need for information (Liu & Yang, 2004).

While technology has reduced the distance between library services and students, distance services librarians are charged to remember that not all countries or all distance students are able to access technology with the same degree of ease (Watson, 2006). Thus, while technology is an important modality to reduce the tyranny of distance it is important for librarians and others to include other modalities in their delivery of information strategies. This is important because access to technology is not universal, nor is all technological systems equal. Therefore, total reliance on technology will cause some distance students to experience information disenfranchisement (Cavanagh, 2008).
The modern Internet-based distance education (DE) is steadily moving forward and has attracted attention and gradually showed strong development momentum. Owusu-Ansah (2010) studied on the accessibility, adequacy and use of ICT in UG, Legon distance learning students. The main findings of the study were that the inaccessibility and inadequacy of ICT facilities had severely affected students’ academic output especially in the area of research, learning and even library services. Moreover, the findings found a strong relationship between ‘adequacy of ICT facilities’ and learning and research. A regression test also found out that there is a positive, very strong and significant relationship \((r= 0.814, p < 0.01)\) between adequacy of the facilities/resources and academic performance. Thus, enough incorporation of ICT into library services is needed to ensure successive learning outcome of distance students.

2.5.3 Distance Learning and Accessibility of E-resources

Emerging technologies and digital files have revolutionized library and information services. Academic libraries have positioned themselves in the twenty-first century with online databases where students can remotely access electronic resources via the Internet. Establishing a virtual presence to complement a physical presence has become a necessity for higher educational institutions that include online courses and online resources (Johnson, Adams & Cummins, 2012). Twenty-first century learners include digital natives and digital immigrants with varying demographic and psychographic profiles. Learners also have varying physiological, social, cognitive and affective characteristics. Since emerging technology is a dynamic force, teaching and learning must also be dynamic to meet diverse learner needs including anytime, anywhere access (Johnson, Adams & Cummins, 2012). Effective library services can improve academic learning and performance amongst distance students.
Al, Soydal & Tonta (2010) found out that the low usage of electronic books by distance students of Finland was because most students are unaware of this easily accessible option. Using the descriptive survey approach, the researchers concluded that students who used electronic books preferred the personalized research experience due to the convenience of remote access, contextual search capabilities, personal bookshelves, annotation tools, automatic citations, mobile options and over 459,000 titles accessible through ebrary, an online digital library. An instructional module designed specifically for ebrary and aggressively promoted, would increase students’ awareness, teach them relevant skills, encourage proactive research, and bridge distance gaps (Al, Soydal, & Tonta, 2010).

Moreover, online library resources are available to multiple users, eliminating waitlists for checked out books. In recent years, library databases have grown, technologies to deliver and view electronic resources have improved, and the diversity for which electronic resources can be accessed across multiple electronic platforms has also improved (Head & Eisenberg, 2010). Cloud based applications have changed the scope of how information is searched, accessed, stored and learned (Johnson, Adams, & Cummins, 2012). Online databases such as EBSCOhost, Emerald and Academic Search Premier provide cloud solutions for students seeking information. As a result, the purposes of library services have shifted in order to meet the changing needs of students.

**Summary of the chapter**

The chapter reviewed literature within the domain of library services to distance learning institutions. The chapter considered areas like library services and distance learning, distance learning and the library environment, accessibility of library resources and ICT and library services in distance learning. It was distinct and clear that regarding library
services within the distance learning programmes, many library services can be provided to enhance the academic pursuits of the students. However, technological, geographical and among others serve as hindrance to ensuring adequate library service provision.
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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Methodology as stated in Polit and Beck (2004), is the process of obtaining, organizing and analyzing data. This section is divided into sub-sections which discusses the research design, research population, sample frame, data collection procedure, data collection instrument, data analysis techniques.

3.2 Research Approach

According to Creswell (2013) and Engstrom & Salehi-Sangari (2007), researchers have identified three basic approaches to conducting a research and these are qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. Potter (1996) suggests that the decision of a research approach is contingent on the research purpose. Thus the approach to this study is quantitative and the survey method was chosen for this study.

According to Creswell (2013) a study is quantitative, when it is an inquiry into a social or human problem based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalization of the theory hold true. Quantitative research uses data that are structured in the form of numbers or that can be immediately transported into numbers (Hair et al., 2003). It is a very controlled, exact approach to research (Muijs, 2010). The assumptions underlying quantitative methods are that reality is objective and independent of the researcher and the researcher remains distant and independent of what is being researched. Further the values of the researcher do not interfere with the research (research is value-free). Primarily, research is founded on theories and deductive forms of logic and hypotheses which are tested in a cause-effect order. Kebumen (1999) found
that, the main reason for conducting research is to empower the researcher to predict, explain, and understand some phenomenon after establishing generalizations that contribute to theory.

3.3 Research Design

A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. Research design constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measuring and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004). A choice of research design reflects decisions about the priority being given to the following; expressing causal connections between variables, generalizing to larger groups of individuals than those actually forming part of the investigation, understanding behaviour and meaning of that behaviour in its specific social context and having a temporal (i.e. over time) appreciation of social phenomena and their interconnections (Bell and Bryman, 2007).

3.3.1 The Survey Method

Connaway & Powell (2010) identified that survey is a group of research methods commonly used to determine the present status of a given phenomenon. The basic assumption of most survey research is that, by carefully following certain scientific procedures, one can make inferences about a large group of element by studying a relatively small number selected from the large group. The word ‘survey’ literally means to look at or to see over or beyond or, in order words, to observe. A key strength, as indicated earlier, is that if properly done, it allows one to generalize from a smaller group to a larger group from which the subgroup has been selected. The use of survey research, as compared to other methods, does not give the researcher control over the research environment and does not allow the researcher to manipulate the independent variable,
hence not considered capable of establishing causal relationship (Connaway & Powell, 2010).

3.4 Unit of analysis

The researcher focused on the data collected from the Level 400 Distance Education (DE) students of the Accra Learning Center and the University Librarian as the unit of analysis to assess the accessibility of academic library services to distance learners, with specific reference to UGLS.

3.5 Population of the Study

A population is the total collection of elements or participants about which the researcher makes some inferences (Cooper & Schindler, 2003) and Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) also define a “population as a complete set of events, people or things on which the focus of the research falls and in which the researcher has an interest about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics”.

Thus, the study targets two groups of population. They are Level 400 distance learning students in the Accra Learning Center and the University Librarian as the population for this study. The population for the Distance Education (DE) students was 616. Table 1 illustrates a tabular description of Level 400 of DE students from the Accra Learning Center.
Table 1: Level 400 of DE students’ distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population by Gender</th>
<th>Sub-Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Male</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Female</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>616</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UG Accra Learning Center (2015)

3.6 Sample size

A sample according to Field (2005) refers to “a smaller (but representative) collection of units from a population used to determine truths about that population”. That is, a sample is a part of an entire population that possesses attitudes, opinions, habits, or characteristics that you wish to study. The appropriate sample size is influenced by your purpose in conducting the research. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) explained that, any sample that has less than 20 to 30 individuals within it is too small since it constitutes a small percentage of population. However, Newman (2007) indicated that a sample size of 30% of a population is enough to obtain adequate confidence. Thus, for a population size of 616 units, a sample size of 185 Level 400 Distance Education students which constitutes 30% for this study was adequate. This sample size was enough to draw inferential conclusions, and as far as possible, represent the target population under scrutiny. Apart from the Level 400 distance learners, the University Librarian (1) was interviewed at his office in the Balme Library.

3.7 Sampling Technique

Sampling constitutes a key step in the research process in social survey research. Two sampling techniques employed in this study were the convenience and purposive sampling techniques. The convenience sampling, a non-random sampling technique was used for the study.
3.7.1 Convenience Sampling

The study adopted the convenience sampling technique to reach the sample of distance students. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Shuttleworth, 2009). Convenience sampling is useful when homogeneity and inaccessibility arises (Neuman, 2007). Criticism about convenience sampling is that the sampling is bias and that the sample is not representative of the entire population. This may be the biggest disadvantage when using the convenience sample as it leads to more problems and criticisms. Another significant criticism about using a convenience sample is the limitation in generalization and inference making about the entire population.

Since the sample is not representative of the population, the results of the study could not speak for the entire population (Castilo, 2009). Distance learners are geographically isolated as well as have little or no access to library facilities as indicated in the problem statement. This characteristic and others makes the entire population homogenous relative to the study objectives. And for the reason that Level 400s are in a better position to give information regarding this study, it was considered that individuals selected to respond to the questionnaire gave information that was representative of the entire population. Therefore, this study ensured that only Level 400 students of distance education were carefully selected. More so, individuals from Level 100-300 in the distance education programme were excluded in the study.

3.7.2 Purposive Sampling

On the other hand, purposive sampling was used to select the University Librarian. This sampling technique was based on the judgment of the researcher regarding the
characteristics of the sample. The sampling technique relied on the judgment of the researcher when it came to selecting the units (e.g., people, cases/organizations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied (Lund Research, 2010).

### 3.8 Instrumentation

Instrumentation is the process of collecting data; it involves the selection or design and the administration of the instrument (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). This study adopted the use of both interview and questionnaire to collect data from respondents.

#### 3.8.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are used to collect data from the distance learners of UG, Legon for the quantitative part of the study. Questionnaire is a document containing a number of questions to be investigated (Kumekpor, 2002). The choice of questionnaires included; usually less cost, ability to collect data over a wide geographical area within a short period of time. Additionally, (Neuman, 2007) explains that respondents do not spend too much time answering questionnaires as compared to the other forms and also allows respondents to remain anonymous.

The instrument was self-administered. The questionnaire was divided into five sections. Section one examines the bio-data of participants, Section two elicited data from respondents on their level of awareness of the information resources, Section three examined the availability of library facilities, section four considers Adequacy of information needs and Section five covers the challenges faced by distance learners in accessing information at the University of Ghana Library System.
3.8.2 Interview

Interviews are one of the most important sources of information in research (Yin, 1994) that offers a researcher the opportunity to modify the line of enquiry, follow up on interesting responses and investigate underlying motives in a way that posted and self-administered questionnaires could not, thereby enhancing the reliability of the data (Robson, 2002). In this study, interviewee was encouraged to speak openly, frankly and give as much detail as possible. More information and in greater depth could be obtained through interview. Interviews also allowed flexibility as there was an opportunity to restructure questions (Kothari, 2004). Due to the nature of this study, unstructured or in-depth interviews were employed to collect rich information from the University Librarian.

The unstructured or in-depth interview schedule which was a set of questions administered through oral or verbal communication in a face-to-face relationship between a researcher and the respondents was used to gather qualitative information from the appropriate authority in Balme library. The interview allowed flexibility as there was an opportunity to restructure questions (Kothari, 2004). The method was efficient to the researcher and helped to get face to face account of the librarian’s perspective on the subject matter. Unstructured interviews (sometimes referred to as "depth" or "in depth" interviews have very little structure at all. The interviewer conducted the interview with the aim of discussing in more details the major objectives in the study.

3.9 Sources of Data

Data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources for the research. The primary data consisted of data gathered from questionnaires administered to Level 400
distance learning students in the Accra Learning Center and the University Librarian. The survey study used the questionnaire to gather relevant primary data for the study to give specific responses to research questions.

The secondary sources of data for the study included research reports, annual reports, textbooks, statistical data and electronic resources from Emerald, SAGE publications, Science Direct and many more. These sources provided the researcher a sense of direction and information on what was to be done in relation to the accessibility of academic library services to distance learners, with specific reference to UGLS.

3.10 Data Collection Procedure

3.10.1 Questionnaire

As indicated earlier data for the study were collected using questionnaire as the main instrument and this is administered by the researcher to the respondents, one person after another. About 20 minutes maximum time was given to respondents to complete the questionnaire. The respondents of the study were identified and questionnaires administered to them at their tutorial sessions at the Accra City campus. The process lasted for four weeks and where explanations and clarifications were needed, the researcher was quick to assist.

3.10.2 Interview

The interview was conducted in the interviewee’s office by the use of both digital recorder and hand written method. The data was collected by the researcher during the month of March, 2015. During each interview, the interviewee was marked, recorded, and responses to the questions written down as the respondent answers each question.
face-to-face. The average interview duration was 20 to 30 minutes. The data collection exercise took two weeks. However, follow-ups were conducted to clarify vague responses and to be certain about responses that needed evidence.

3.11 Validity and Reliability

Research quality is normally determined by the validity and reliability of the methodology and data. Patton (2001) identifies that validity and reliability are the two main factors that any research should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of data.

3.11.1 Validity

Validity is connected to the question: what we are supposed to measure? (Kinnear and Taylor, 1996). Simply, validity means that the researcher makes conclusions that are correct and true (McBurney and White, 2004). It is stated that validity in many ways should be viewed as the most important criterion when doing research (Bryman and Bell, 2007). When performing experiments, it is of great importance that we can draw valid conclusions and also to make valid generalizations (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). Yin (2009) states that validity includes different tests that make it possible to judge the quality of a research design. These tests are; construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability.

The researcher ensured the validity of the items in the questionnaire by pre-testing it on people with the same characteristics as the respondents to be used for the study. The tested questionnaire helps the researcher fine tune the items in the question to measure what it is intended. Additionally, the researcher avoids items which distract respondents
from providing the appropriate response to the items. As much as possible the researcher avoids the use of leading questions which also distract the instrument from measuring what is intended (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005).

3.11.2 Reliability

Explained by Bryman and Bell (2007) reliability is connected to the research question and whether the results of the study are possible to repeat. Merriam (1998) supports this reasoning and underline that reliability concerns a study’s replicability. As explained by Heiman (1999) a result or measurement of a study should be consistent without any measurement errors in order to be reliable. This means that if another person were to repeat your study, following the same procedures that you have accounted for, the researcher should end up with the same results and conclusions (Yin, 2009). The author strongly underlines that this concerns doing the same study, and not doing a similar study through another case. Further explained by Yin (2009), one should make it a habit to operationalize as many steps of the process as possible, where the study should be conducted as if you had someone behind you that always controlled your work and inspected what you are doing.

Therefore, in order to make the study as reliable as possible, data collected is documented carefully and the same observational schedule is used throughout the study, giving the study a prerequisite to perform observations that are coherent, which could easily be done by other researchers if they used the same schedule for the same experiment in the same environment. Also, a standardized questionnaire with Likert scale is used for manipulation-checks. This provides other researchers a very good opportunity to perform this study and end up with the same results. Furthermore, both
observations and manipulation check questions are performed in high numbers with the aim of making the result of the findings reliable.

3.12 Pre-Testing

Data collection begun with a pilot test during which the questionnaires were pre-tested. The pre-testing exercise was used to decide on the suitability of the data collection instruments. The pretest study was conducted using 5 randomly selected Level 300 Distance Education students of the Koforidua Learning Centre to determine whether questions in the questionnaires were clear enough to elicit the appropriate responses. It consisted of both close and open ended questions. This enabled the researcher to make necessary changes in the questionnaires. It enabled the researcher know the right period for administering the questionnaires to students.

3.13 Data Analysis and Interpretation of results

Creswell (2013) stated that, data analysis requires that the researcher be comfortable with developing categories and making comparisons and contrasts. It also requires that the researcher be open to possibilities and see contrary or alternative explanations for the findings.

For the quantitative part of the study, the analytical tool for this study was the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 19.0. It is a common computer program that performs the statistical calculations and is widely used in data analysis (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006). After the field work, the quantitative data was coded, entered into SPSS package, and cleaned and verified. Frequencies and percentages were generated and presented in tables and charts. Pearson Chi-Square was also used to test the relationship
between the availability of library services and programmes and remote access to library e-resources and other databases.

3.13.1 Thematic Analysis

Data gathered from the interview is analyzed using a thematic strategy. In thematic analysis the researcher makes notes and sorts them into various categories (Boyatzis, 1998). It helps researchers to move their analysis from a broad reading of the data towards discovering patterns and developing themes. A theme represents a level of patterned response or meaning from the data that is related to the research questions at hand. Determining what can be considered a theme can be used with deciding prevalence. The study focuses on specific themes such as

i. Are the information needs of distance learners adequately provided for?

ii. Is the University Librarian aware of information needs of DE students and how does the library meet those needs?

iii. What provision is being made for IT skills training and Information Literacy skills for DE students?

iv. What programmes can be designed for DE students in order to meet their information needs?

Interview data is translated, transcribed and carefully read over and over in order to take note of key views expressed by respondents and how they reflect on the key themes in the research questions. The data is further categorized into patterns developed by the researcher based on the research questions. Further, the analysis is semantic, that is semantic themes attempt to identify the explicit and surface meanings of the data. The researcher does not look beyond what the participant said or wrote (Boyatzis, 1998).
3.14 Ethical considerations

In the data collection process, informed consent of the respondents was sought and respondents guaranteed beforehand the privacy of the information they provided. Anonymity of respondents was adhered to when storing and processing data. The researcher accordingly acknowledged all scholarly work and data consulted including books, journals, theses, and field data.
References


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CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and findings of the study. Data was collected from respondents who are Level 400 distance learning students in the Accra Learning Center through the administration of questionnaires. The objectives of the study were:

i. To evaluate the level of awareness of library services offered by the University of Ghana Library System to distance learners.

ii. To investigate the library services and programmes offered to distance learners.

iii. To discover the level of IT or computer knowledge in accessing the UGLS.

iv. To ascertain if distance learners are capable of accessing the library e-resources and other databases (remote access).

v. To ascertain whether the information needs of distance learners are adequately provided for.

vi. To assess the challenges faced by the distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System.

The data is presented using tables, pie chart, bar chart, mean, standard deviation and Pearson chi square. In all 185 questionnaires were distributed out of which 138 were accurately filled and returned. The 138 responses are analyzed based on the research objectives and questions representing 75.0% response rate. Babbie (2005) points out that for a survey such as this study, a response rate of at least fifty percent (50%) is adequate for analysis and reporting. He further added that a response rate of sixty percent (60%) is
good while that of seventy percent (70%) is very good. Therefore, a response rate of 75.0% raises no question for the analysis.

### 4.1 Biographical Information of respondents

To understand the position of respondents, some information was collected with regard to the profile of respondents.

The researcher gathered information on the gender of respondents. Figure 4.1 shows the results obtained.

![Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents](source: Field data, June, 2015.)

The study gathered data with regards to the gender of the respondents. From figure 41, out of 138 respondents, the females constituted (57.0%) while males constituted (43.0%), indicating that the females outnumbered the males in this study.

Also, the researcher gathered information in relation to the age range of the respondents. Figure 4.2 captures the results obtained.
The results obtained indicated that out of the total participants, more than half of respondents (55.1%) were within the age group of 15 to 24 years while a few of them, (3.6%) were 44 years and above. In conclusion, it can be said that majority of the respondents were within the ages of 15 - 24 years.

4.2 Awareness and Availability of library services and programmes

The researcher gathered information from respondents regarding the awareness and availability of library services and programmes from the University of Ghana Library System to distance learners better still, in the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education (UG, Legon). Table 4.1 shows the results.
Table 4.1: Awareness and Availability of library services and programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Awareness of library services</th>
<th>Availability of library services and programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58 (42.0%)</td>
<td>20 (14.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>63 (45.7%)</td>
<td>69 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>17 (12.3%)</td>
<td>49 (35.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138 (100.0%)</td>
<td>138 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

Results from Table 1 show that about half of the respondents 63 (45.7%) and 69 (50.0%), indicated “No” to the awareness and availability of library services and programmes in the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education (UG, Legon) respectively. However, the least of them 17 (12.3%), were not sure about the awareness these library services while 20 (14.5%) stated that these library services and programmes were available in the institute. This is a clear indication that a greater proportion of the respondents were not aware of the library services and programmes because they were not available from the University of Ghana Library System to distance learners.

Also, information was gathered by the researcher in relation to the extent of availability of library services and programmes in the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education (Table 4.2).
Table 4.2: Extent of availability of library services and programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral /not sure</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly available</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

According to the results in the table above, less than half of the respondents 57 (41.3%) indicated that library services and programmes were not available in the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education while a few of them 1 (0.7%) stated otherwise thus, highly available. On this note, it appears that library services and programmes were inadequate in the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education according to respondents.

4.2.1 Level of computer knowledge

It was a major objective of this study assesses the extent of computer knowledge. Consequently, the researcher inquired from respondents about their source of acquisition of computer literacy or training, level of IT or computer knowledge and their effect on their access to University of Ghana library services (UGLS). The results have been displayed in Tables 4.3.
Table 4.3: Source of acquisition of computer literacy or training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University's effort</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal effort</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the University</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

With regards to the source of acquisition of computer literacy or training, the results in Table 4.3 showed that a greater number of the respondents 94 (68.1%), acquired their IT training through personal effort other than the University’s effort, outside the University or other means. However, a few of them 7 (5.1%) gained their computer literary or training through other means. It can therefore be inferred from the results that most of the subjects acquired their IT training through personal effort.

Table 4.4 shows the level of respondents’ IT or computer knowledge in accessing University of Ghana library services (UGLS).

Table 4.4: Level of IT or computer knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.
According to the results in the table above, out of 138 respondent, more than half of them 100 (72.5%), were at the intermediate level while a few of them 17 (12.3%), were at the advanced stage. This shows clearly that most of the respondents were at the intermediate level thus, well versed in IT or computer knowledge and therefore a start point to access the UGLS very well or a requirement for using electronic resources.

Using the scale Very Poor, Poor, Fair, Good and Very Good, the effect of the level of computer literacy of respondents was assessed (Table 4.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

Results from Table 5 shows clearly that less than half of the respondents 58 (42.0%), indicated that effect of level of computer literacy on accessing library services was good. On the contrary, 52 (37.7%) of the respondents indicated fair for the effect of computer literacy on accessing library services.
4.2.2 Remote access to library e-resources and other databases

It was the objective of the study to find out whether users access the e-resources and other databases for their academic work. Information was also collected regarding respondents’ remote access to the library e-resources and other databases as well as their main point of access. Tables 4.6 and 4.7 show the results.

Table 4.6: Remote access to library e-resources and other databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

According to the results, 113 (81.9%) out 138 respondents made it clear that they do not have remote access to library electronic resources and other databases as distance learners while 21 (15.2%) did, with 4 (2.9%) having no idea whatsoever. In this sense, it can be concluded that most of the respondents had no remote access to library electronic resources and other databases.

However, the researcher gathered information from respondents concerning the main access point of library electronic resources and other databases (Table 4.7).
Table 4.7: Main point of access of library e-resources and other databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accra Learning Center - computer laboratory</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

With reference to the results in the table above, majority of the respondents 66 (47.8%), indicated their various homes as their main access point as against the office, Accra Learning Center computer laboratory and other access points. Nonetheless, a few of them 14 (10.1%) indicated other access points than those mentioned above. It can be inferred from the results that a greater number of the respondents accessed library e-resources and other databases from home.

The researcher wanted to identify the relationship between the availability of library services and the ability of students to access these library e-resources and other databases. Pearson Chi-Square was used to test the relationship between the availability of library services and programmes and remote access to library e-resources and other databases. The results are presented in Table 4.8 below.
Table 4.8: Library services and programmes * Access to library e-resources and other databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability of library services and programmes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

\[ X^2 = 3.623a, \text{ df } = 4, \text{ p } = 0.459 \]

The Chi-square value for the availability of library services and programmes and remote access to library e-resources and other databases is \( X^2 (4) = 3.623a \) with an associated p-value of 0.459. The result provides no evidence of association between the availability of library services and programmes and remote access to library e-resources and other databases. It is thus evident in the table above that, respondents did not have remote access to the library e-resources and other databases because library services and programmes were not available. Thus, there is no relationship or association between these two variables which are the availability of library services and programmes and remote access to library e-resources and other databases.

4.3 Provision of information needs

In order to identify the various library resources available to students, it was a need to ascertain the information needs of students. The respondents were required to use a 5-
point Likert scale anchored on Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5) to measure the provision of information needs to distance learners. The means and standard Deviations are presented in Table 4.9 below.

### Table 4.9: Provision of information needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media (networking) services - an online service, platform, or site used to communicate with library users (Facebook, twitter)</td>
<td>2.3261</td>
<td>1.29097</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual reference services - using request forms to make research queries either in print or electronic from the UGLS</td>
<td>2.5435</td>
<td>1.29637</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to online or computerized system (OPAC) to assist students access library collections</td>
<td>3.2971</td>
<td>1.37448</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation services through email, toll-free telephone services.....</td>
<td>2.9420</td>
<td>1.55563</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to inter-library loan services such texts supplementary reading and reference services</td>
<td>2.5145</td>
<td>1.41543</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online user education services - Library orientation programme available through e-mail, Weblog, e-bulletin boards, e-lectures, e-seminars e-workshops, etc.</td>
<td>2.7029</td>
<td>1.32030</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document delivery service (DDS) - ICT - based document delivery of documents in digitalized format through the electronic mail.</td>
<td>2.9710</td>
<td>1.47456</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

It could be concluded from the value of means generated that, ‘Access to online or computerized system (OPAC) to assist students access library collections’ scored the highest mean of (3.29) per respondent among other factors. However, the statement ‘Social media (networking) services - an online service, platform, or site used to communicate with library users (Facebook, twitter)” was rated the lowest with a mean
score of 2.32. Thus, respondents did not strongly agree to the provision of their information needs through social media services.

To better provide satisfactory library services, distance learners gave their opinions on adequacy of UGLS to provide information needs. Respondents were required to assess the adequacy in the provision of their information needs (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10: Adequate provision of information needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely no</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly no</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither yes nor no</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>138</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

Results in Table 4.10 show that the information needs of respondents were mostly not provided for adequately according to 57 (41.3%) of them. On the contrary, the least of them 2 (1.4%), indicated that their information needs were absolutely provided for adequately. This is a clear indication that the information needs of respondents were mostly not provided for adequately as evident in the results for the category of respondents for Absolutely no (30.4%) and mostly no (41.3%).

4.3.1 Challenges of Accessibility of academic library services

It was the objective of the study to explore the challenges faced by the distance learners in accessing library services. Different responses emerged in this section.
The respondents were required to use a 5-point Likert scale anchored on Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5) to measure the challenges faced by the distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System. The means and standard Deviations are presented in Table 4.11 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographical isolation</td>
<td>3.1957</td>
<td>1.49870</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet connectivity</td>
<td>3.1667</td>
<td>1.28769</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library and Computer Training</td>
<td>3.5652</td>
<td>1.10047</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT tools such as computer, iPads, Tablets …</td>
<td>3.4565</td>
<td>1.38880</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining study materials</td>
<td>3.3261</td>
<td>1.32996</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing library books</td>
<td>3.1449</td>
<td>1.43751</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to interact with library staff</td>
<td>3.2061</td>
<td>1.35713</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data, June, 2015.

It could be concluded from the value of means generated that, ‘Library and Computer Training’ scored the highest mean of (3.56) per respondent as against other factors. On the contrary, the statement ‘Borrowing library books’ was rated lowest with a mean score of 3.14. Thus, respondents strongly agreed that borrowing library books was a challenge faced by the distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System.
4.4 Responses from Interview with University Librarian

For the purpose of responding to the objectives of this study, the University Librarian
was interviewed to help answer the research questions, in relation to the accessibility of
Academic Library Services to Distance Learners.

4.4.1 Library services and programmes accessible to distance learners

According to the ACRL (2008) Board of Directors, every student, faculty member,
administrator, staff member, or any other member of an institution of higher education, is
ettitled to the library services and resources of that institution, including direct
communication with the appropriate library personnel, regardless of where enrolled or
located in affiliation with the institution. Academic libraries which include that of the
University of Ghana must, therefore, meet the information and research needs of all these
constituents, wherever they may be. This principle of access entitlement, as applied to
individuals at a distance, is the undergirding and uncompromising conviction of the
Standards for Distance Learning Library Services.

Moreover, access to appropriate library services and resources is essential for the
attainment of superior academic skills, regardless of where students, faculty, staff, and
programs are located. This means that members of the distance learning community,
including those with disabilities, must therefore be provided effective and appropriate
library services and resources, which may differ from, but must be equivalent to those
provided for students and faculty in traditional campus settings.

Therefore, with respect to the accessibility of library services and programmes to
distance learners, University Librarian indicated that,
‘The library services and programmes accessible to students include Online Catalogue, e-resources and Library space’ (University Librarian)

However, the University Librarian was quick to add that not all the library services were accessible to distance learners specifically,

‘There are no Library Services such as borrowing, and night sections to the distance learners. They do not have borrowing rights. Moreover, they are not registered as Library users and therefore could not access the Library’s resources. However, the Library space is made available to them. The open collections are also accessible to the DE students. That notwithstanding, closed collections such as Africana Reserved, Research Commons, Knowledge Commons, Student Reference Reserved among others are not accessible to the distance level.’ (University Librarian)

That notwithstanding, the University Librarian stated that,

‘Orientations are not organized for distance learners adding that they can however use the library space with reference services. Furthermore, they have access to the 24hr reading room but not the closed collections.’

4.4.2 Awareness of library services in University of Ghana Library System

It is very important to note that before distance can access the library resources and programmes of the University of Ghana Library System, awareness must be created. In other words, students must be aware of these resources in order to access them. Therefore, in relation to the awareness of library services to distance learners, the University Librarian made it clear that:
‘The distance learners have very little or no awareness of Library Services because they are not given any user orientation (education) when they report to school as fresh students.’

However, the University of Ghana Librarian indicated that

‘...I am not too sure. Besides, they are not frequently seen in the Library and only a few access the 24 hour reading room’ (University Librarian).

4.4.3 Accessibility of library e-resources and other databases

Distance learners just like regular students are equally entitled to access the e-resources and other databases of the University of Ghana Library System. The researcher posed a question in relation to the research objective above and University Librarian affirmed that,

‘It should be possible since the distance learners are students of University of Ghana, Legon’

Furthermore, equitable distance learning library services are often more personalized than might be expected on campus, because students and faculty in distance learning programs seldom have direct access to a full range of library services and materials. However, according to the University of Ghana Librarian, the situation is not so in the University of Ghana adding that,

‘The distance students could not access library e-resources and other databases because of lack of the user education.’
4.4.4 Information needs of distance learners

The University of Ghana is responsible for ensuring that information needs of distance learners are adequately provided for. ACRL (2008) Board of Directors reiterates that, this must include the provision of convenient, direct access to library materials in appropriate formats that are of sufficient quality, depth, number, scope, and currency to meet students’ needs in fulfilling course assignments thereby; enriching their academic programs while meeting their teaching and research needs to facilitate their acquisition of lifelong learning skills. Therefore with regards to the adequate provision of information needs of distance learners, the University of Ghana Librarian stated accordingly;

‘No, not adequately provided for’ … ‘None of the issues of distance learners has ever been raised at any of our meetings or forums therefore, we are not too sure. Moreover, they are like a forgone species...’

4.6 Challenges facing distance learners in accessing library services

Regardless of the technological developments rendering location less relevant than in the past, distance learning students still face distinct and different challenges involving access to library e-resource and programmes. These include internet connectivity, geographical location, library and computer training, borrowing of library books and inability to interact with library staff.

Nevertheless, the University Librarian reiterated that;

‘In-ability to borrow from the system owing to the fact that the Balme Library no longer opens on Sundays and this is likely to affect those who live and work outside Greater Accra who only come around on weekends. Moreover, they lack proper orientation and this could affect their literacy skills.’
Nevertheless, the University Librarian added

‘Unfamiliarity of Library’s Setting (layout) owing to the absence of instructions or Library guide. That notwithstanding, distance learners have a feeling of not being welcomed (the feeling of belongingness). Distance learners are not aware of the library resources and services and find the library intimidating and overwhelming. Therefore, some find difficulties in the usage of the library. Meanwhile, others make a self-inflicted challenge (not making the effort to study).’

In the light of these challenges, it will be very necessary for the University of Ghana to make available the provision of special funding arrangements, specialized staffing, proactive planning, and promotion to deliver equivalent library services and to achieve equivalent results in teaching and learning, and generally to maintain quality in distance learning programs.

4.7 Discussion of Findings

This study investigates the accessibility of academic library services to distance learners, with specific reference to UGLS. Some findings were made and are discussed in this chapter. A lot of issues emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews administered to the distance learners and the University Librarian. The discussion of findings was based on the objectives of the study. These were evaluating the level of awareness of library services offered by UGLS to distance learners, finding out the level of computer knowledge in accessing the library services, ascertaining if distance learners were capable of accessing the library e-resources and other databases (remote access), ascertaining whether the information needs of distance learners are adequately provided
for and finally examining the challenges facing the distance learners in accessing library services.

4.7.2 Level of awareness of library services

The survey uncovered that (45.7%) of distance learners indicated that they were not aware of the library services available in the UGLS. This indeed is not impressive on the part of the University if the conceptual framework adopted for this study (the Standards for Distance Learning Library Service developed by Association of College and Research Library (ACRL), 2008) which is “students should be able to have the right to use resources and services of the library irrespective of their location” is upheld. A similar study by, Al, Soydal & Tonta (2010) found out that the low usage of electronic books by distance students of Finland was because most students are unaware of this easily accessible option. Using the descriptive survey approach, students who used electronic books preferred the personalized research experience with the convenience of remote access, contextual search capabilities, personal bookshelves, annotation tools, automatic citations, mobile options and over 459,000 titles accessible through ebrary, an online digital library. An instructional module designed specifically for ebrary and aggressively promoted, would increase students’ awareness, teach them relevant skills, encourage proactive research, and bridge distance gaps (Al, Soydal, & Tonta, 2010).

In support of the above findings, previous study (Liu and Yang, 2004) indicated distance students were underutilizing library resources. Liu and Yang (2004) sought to better understand students’ decisions in selecting and using information resources. They surveyed 290 randomly selected distance students at Texas A&M University. Of the 164 who responded, 49.7% indicated they used the Internet as their primary information source for their coursework and academic activities, while 28.8% selected the university
libraries. Online databases and e-journals were reported as the most frequently used resources, but 49% of respondents reported rarely or never using the libraries. More students reported the desire to “get materials I want fast” was “very important” compared to any other reason for selecting their primary information source (Liu & Yang, 2004, p. 26).

Veal (2002), supported the findings in this study by indicating that distance learners reported challenges accessing library resources and instruction, but the issue of “library anxiety” among this population was not widely researched according to Veal (2002), who administered Bostick’s Library Anxiety Scale and a general survey to off-campus graduate students (n=143) at a small Catholic university. This group, most of whom were 30 years old or older, reported average to low library anxiety. Males reported slightly higher levels of library anxiety, and there was an inverse relationship between age and library anxiety. No significant relationships were found between library anxiety and students’ perceptions of resource availability, nor their distance from an academic library.

Students must be made aware of these support services if they are to fully benefit from them (Long, 2009), because there is a real difference between accessibility and availability (Holloway, 2008: 289). Similarly, librarians should encourage DLs to request resources early, leaving plenty of time before assignments are due, to prevent them arriving too late to be useful (Long, 2009).
4.7.3 Level of computer knowledge

With regards to Knowledge in IT (68.1%), acquired IT training through personal effort other than the University’s effort, outside the University or other means. In addition, (72.5%), were at the intermediate level showing clearly that most respondents were at start point to accessing the electronic resources or databases.

A study by Owusu-Ansah (2010) corroborated the findings in this present study. In his study, distance learners gave their view on knowledge on ICT. The majority 76 (80%) indicated that they were knowledgeable on the use of computer but 19 (20%) indicated that they had no knowledge whatsoever on computer as an ICT facility.

Supporting the assertion in this study, Hensley & Miller (2010) reported that it is important that distance learners are able to access institution library resources in a timely and convenient way. Benefits of the ubiquitous use of technology have been recognised by academic librarians, both in the provision of services and accessing resources, with movement away from print collections towards increased provision of remote access to e-resources within virtual libraries. This has been enabled by the existence of seamless and improved functionality of interfaces, such as new resource discovery software (Bower & Mee, 2010). This benefits all users, but in particular distance learners who need to access library resources from home or work (Hensley & Miller, 2010).

4.7.3 Accessing the library e-resources and other databases

Students’ use of academic libraries is extensively researched and discussed in professional literature. In recent years, the focus has shifted to studying the effects of the rapidly changing electronic environment on libraries’ relevance in higher learning settings (Hines, 2008). In this study, majority (81.9%) distance learners had no remote
access to library electronic resources and other databases. However, among those who accessed library e-resources and other databases, they accessed library e-resources and other databases from home and not Accra Learning Center - computer laboratory.

To address the problem of inaccessibility of the e-resources, some studies (Secker, 2008; Virkus, 2008) have identified that central to meeting DLs expectations is facilitating the finding of, and timely access to a broad range of relevant information (Heaps, 2001; Secker, 2008), together with information enquiry support and instruction. According to these studies, an active role in teaching information seeking and retrieval strategies is essential, enabling distance learners to successfully search complex and multiple information systems (Virkus, 2008). DLs should be taught how to use the library in an independent and effective manner, in a way that meets their specific needs, so they can overcome complexities rather than having them removed for them (Kramer, 2010). This is important for novice users (Gruca, 2010), and should be done using different formats and channels (Henning, 2010), for example using virtual tours and streaming video to inform users of physical library resources (Draper & Turnage, 2007). Against this backdrop, Dadzie (2009) highlighted the need for interoperability of e-library services within the e-learning platform. Her data suggested that infrastructure, technology and training should be considered by the university administrators to increase the rate of adoption of e-learning within the community.
References


CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt was made to summarize the study and conclusions drawn in the findings. Below is the summary of findings.

5.1 Summary of findings

The study sought to investigate the accessibility of Academic Library Services to Distance Learners; a case study of University of Ghana Library System (UGLS). The specific objectives included the following:

i. To assess the level of awareness of library services available from the University of Ghana Library System to distance learners.

ii. To investigate the library services and programmes available to distance learners.

iii. To find out the level of IT or computer knowledge in accessing the UGLS.

iv. To ascertain if distance learners can access the library e-resources and other databases (remote access).

v. To ascertain whether the information needs of distance learners are adequately provided for.

vi. To assess the challenges faced by the distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System.

In order to address the objectives properly, the following research questions were answered by adopting a survey methodology for the study which involved self-administered questionnaires to solicit data from 138 respondents. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was then used to analyze the completed questionnaire. The
questionnaire gave each respondent the opportunity to investigate the accessibility of Academic Library Services to Distance Learners. More so, the University Librarian was interviewed on issues regarding level of awareness of library services, the library services and programmes available, level of accessibility of library e-resources and other databases and challenges facing the distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System.

5.1.1 Profile of respondents

The study revealed that out of a total of 138 respondents, the females constituting (57.0%) outnumbered the males (43.0%). Also, majority of respondents (55.1%) were within the age group of 15 to 24 years.

5.1.2 Level of awareness of library services available

The findings revealed that 63 (45.7%) of respondents indicated that they were not aware of the library services available from the University of Ghana to distance learners whiles 17 (12.3%), were aware about the availability of these library services.

5.1.3 Assessing the library services and programmes available to distance learners

From the results of the findings, 69 (50.0%) of respondents indicated that the library services and programmes of the University of Ghana were not available to distance learners whiles 20 (14.5%) stated otherwise. On the whole, 57 (41.3%) indicated that library services and programmes were not available in the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education.
5.1.4 Assessing the level of IT or computer knowledge in accessing the UGLS

According to the findings, a greater number of the subjects 94 (68.1%), acquired their IT training through personal effort other than the University’s effort, outside the University or other means. Moreover, more than half of them 100 (72.5%), were at the intermediate level while a few of them 17 (12.3%), were advanced. This showed clearly that most of the respondents were skilled in computer usage level thus, well versed in IT or computer knowledge and therefore could access the UGLS very well. Nonetheless, most of the respondents were not using their IT skills to access the library services within the UGLS.

5.1.5 Assessing the remote access of library e-resources and other databases

The findings showed clearly that most of the respondents 113 (81.9%), had no remote access to library electronic resources and other databases. However, among those who used library e-resources and other databases, they accessed library e-resources and other databases from home and not Accra Learning Center - computer laboratory.

In view of this, Pearson Chi-Square was used to test the relationship between the availability of library services and programmes and remote access to library e-resources and other databases. The findings revealed that the Chi-square value for the availability of library services and programmes and remote access to library e-resources and other databases was $X^2 (4) = 3.623a$ with an associated p-value of 0.459. The result provided no evidence of association between the availability of library services and programmes and remote access to library e-resources and other databases. It was thus evident in the table above that, respondents did not have remote access to the library e-resources and other databases because library services and programmes were not available. Thus, there was no relationship or association between those two variables which were the
availability of library services and programmes and remote access to library e-resources and other databases.

5.1.6 Assessing the adequate provision of information needs of distance learners

It is concluded from the value of means generated that, ‘Access to online or computerized system (OPAC) to assist students access library collections’ scored the highest mean of (3.29) per respondent among other factors. However, the statement ‘Social media (networking) services - an online service, platform, or site used to communicate with library users (Facebook, twitter)’ was rated the lowest with a mean score of 2.32. Thus, respondents did not strongly agree to the provision of their information needs through social media services.

Furthermore, there was a clear indication that the information needs of respondents were mostly not provided for adequately according to 57 (41.3%) of respondents.

5.1.7 Assessing the challenges faced by distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System

Lastly, it was found out that, ‘Library and Computer Training’ is the major challenge facing distance learners. On the contrary, ‘Borrowing library books’ was not identified as a major challenge. Thus, respondents strongly agreed that borrowing library books was a challenge faced by the distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System.
5.2 Conclusion

Watson (2003) reports that, “DE has revolutionized and democratized the delivery and accessibility of education and has also changed how critical support services, such as library and information service, are provided”. Indeed the present situation poses an implication for libraries, librarians and the university management as a whole. For instance, to academic institutions, library and information services must be accessible to DE students, since this helps in bringing out quality students. Therefore there is the need to also put in place learning support services to aid significantly the educational curricula.

However, it is clear that lack of library orientation organized by the University of Ghana Library System for distance learners affected the use of its library services. There appears to be little collaboration between the UGLS and the Institute of Distance Learning and Continuing Education as confirmed by the Coordinator of the Institute. The effect of this is that distance learners who enroll on the program may graduate from the UG, Legon without tapping into the library resources. Especially when the UGLS has progressed into an online mode, distance learners who have little or no computer skills in accessing library resources would face much difficulty.

Moreover, geographical isolation has been identified as one of the major problems for distance students (Garten and Williams, 2006). In addition to the practical challenges of contacting academic and administrative staff, obtaining study materials and borrowing library books, distance students suffer from the disadvantage of being unable to interact with library staff/personnel. This may lead to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity and lack of confidence on the part of distance learners. It is against this background that the
researcher explored the level of accessibility of academic library services to distance learners. In conclusion, it is established that geographical isolation is really leading to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity of library resources to the distance learners.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the major findings of this research. The recommendations were made to help assess the accessibility of Academic Library Services to Distance Learners; a case study of University of Ghana Library System (UGLS).

5.3.1 Awareness creation

From the results most of the respondents were not aware of services of the University of Ghana Library System that were available to distance learners. In this sense, the social media can be used to enhance awareness creation of available library resources and programmes as well as remote access to these resources by distance learners. Moreover, information gathered from the University Librarian in the course of the interview revealed that ‘orientations were not organized for distance learners, which is one of the reasons why students could not access the resources and programmes of the library’. Therefore, the University of Ghana must ensure that orientations are organized for distance learners for awareness creation of the available library resources and programmes thereby, enhancing accessibility.

5.3.2 Creating awareness of library services and programmes

It was evident in the results that a greater proportion of the respondents were not aware of the library services and programmes because they were not available in the first place to distance learners. This means that if resources were actually available, the distance
learners would be aware and then access them both electronically and remotely. Therefore, the management of University of Ghana Library System, through library orientation and instructions could create more awareness and furthermore equip librarians to provide the information needs of distance learners since it was again revealed in the findings that “the information needs of respondents were mostly not provided for adequately”, according to respondents.

5.3.3 Encouraging the use of Social media

From the findings, respondents did not strongly agree to the provision of their information needs through social media services. This explains why the findings revealed that respondents did not have remote access to library electronic resources and other databases as distance learners. It is important to note that by making library resources accessible electronically using social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, information dissemination will also be enhanced.

5.3.4 User education in Information Literacy Skills

UGLS and the distance learning institute could collaborate to organise computer training sessions for distance learning or ensure that it is included in their curricular after which certificates would be awarded for proof of participation. This is because most of the respondents indicated that they acquired their computer literacy through personal efforts yet could not access the library resources. Information Literacy Skills are very important because if students are not versed in the basic skills, they may not be able to assess the library services and programmes made available to them. Besides, from the results, most of the respondents were not advanced in computer knowledge. Moreover, information gathered from the University librarian revealed that ‘the distance students could not access library e-resources and other databases because of lack of the user education’. In
view of this, the University must ensure that the students undergo some training in relation to how to access electronic resources in order to fully access and benefit from the e-resources and databases of the University of Ghana Library Services (UGLS). This however requires special funding arrangements, specialized staffing and proactive planning in order to maintain quality in distance learning programs

5.3.5 Initiation of borrowing of library resources

The literature confirms that, geographical isolation has been identified as one of the major problems for distance students. In addition to the practical challenges of contacting academic and administrative staff, distance students suffer from the disadvantage of being unable to interact with library staff/personnel, obtaining study materials and borrowing library books. Evidence from the findings indicated that respondents strongly agreed that borrowing library books was a challenge faced by the distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System. Moreover, the University Librarian indicated in an interview that ‘there are no library services such as borrowing, and night sections accessible to the distance learners’ adding that they do not have borrowing rights. He further indicated that they are not registered as Library users and therefore could not even access the Library’s resources’. This may lead to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity and lack of confidence on the part of distance learners and therefore requires measures are put in place to initiate borrowing of library resources by distance learners from the University of Ghana Library Services (UGLS).
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APPENDIX 1

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION STUDIES

TOPIC: ACCESSIBILITY OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY SERVICES TO DISTANCE LEARNERS: A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF GHANA LIBRARY SYSTEM [UGLS]

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DISTANCE STUDENTS

Dear respondent,

I am a student of the Department of Information Studies undertaking a Master of Arts degree (MA). As part of the programme, I am undertaking a research on the topic: Accessibility of Academic Library Services to Distance Learners: A Study of University of Ghana Library System [UGLS]. The objective of the study is to find out the Accessibility of academic library services to distance learners.

This questionnaire has been carefully designed to critically assess the accessibility of academic library services to distance learners, with specific reference to the University of Ghana Library System (UGLS). In view of this, I would like you to be objective in your assessment. Complete anonymity and confidentiality of answers to questions is highly assured. Please feel free to contact me on 0243586647, should you encounter any problem. Your cooperation is very much appreciated! Thank you.

Section A: Biographical Information

1. Gender 01. Male ( ) 02. Female ( )

2. Age 01. 15 – 24 years ( ) 02. 25 – 34 years ( )

( ) 03. 35 – 45 years ( ) 04. 44 years and above ( )
Section B: Awareness and Availability of library services and programmes

3. Are you aware of library services available from the University of Ghana Library System to distance learners?
   01. Yes (     )  02. No (     )  03. Not sure (     )

4. Are there library services and programmes in the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education (UG, Legon)?
   01. Yes (     )  02. No (     )  03. Not sure (     )

5. In your assessment, what is the extent of availability of library services and programmes in the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education?
   01. Not available (     )  02. Less Available (     )  03. Neutral / not sure (     )  04. Available (     )  05. Highly available (     )

Level of computer knowledge

6. Where did you acquire computer literacy or training?
   01. University’s effort (     )  02. Personal effort (     )  03. Outside the University (     )  04. Others, please specify .............

7. How would you rate your level of IT or computer knowledge in accessing the UGLS?
   01. Novice (     )  02. Intermediate (     )  03. Advance (     )  04. Expert (     )

8. Has your level of computer literacy affected you in accessing library services?
   Yes (     )  No (     )  Don’t know (     )

Remote access to library e-resources and other databases

8. Do you have access to the library e-resources and other databases remotely?
   01. Yes (     )  02. No (     )  03. Don’t know (     )

9. Where do you mainly access the library e-resources and other databases?
   01. Office (     )  02. Accra Learning Center - computer laboratory (     )  03. Home (     )  04. Others, please specify ......................
Section C: Provision of information needs

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree to the provision of information needs to distance learners

*Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5)*

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<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social media (networking) services - an online service, platform, or site used to communicate with library users (Facebook, twitter)</td>
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<td>Virtual reference services – using request forms to make research queries either in print or electronic from the UGLS</td>
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<td>Access to online or computerized system (OPAC) to assist students access library collections</td>
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<td>Consultation services through email, toll-free telephone services …</td>
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<td>Access to inter-library loan services such texts supplementary reading and reference services</td>
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<td>Online user education services - Library orientation programme available through e-mail, Weblog, e-bulletin boards, e-lectures, e-seminars e-workshops. etc.</td>
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<td>Document delivery service (DDS) - ICT- based document delivery of documents in digitalized format through the electronic mail</td>
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11. In your assessment, are your information needs adequately provided for?

01. Absolutely no (     ) 02. Mostly no (     ) 03. Neither yes nor no (     ) 04. Mostly yes (     ) 05. Absolutely yes (     )
Challenges of Accessibility of academic library services

12. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements below regarding challenges faced by the distance learners in accessing library services at the University of Ghana Library System

Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5)

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<tr>
<td>Geographical isolation</td>
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<td>Internet connectivity</td>
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<td>Library and Computer Training</td>
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<td>IT tools such as computer, IPads, Tablets …</td>
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<td>Obtaining study materials</td>
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<td>Borrowing library books</td>
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<td>Inability to interact with library staff</td>
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13. What are your recommendations to the challenges above?

..................................................................................................................................................
APPENDIX 2

TOPIC: ACCESSIBILITY OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY SERVICES TO DISTANCE LEARNERS: A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF GHANA LIBRARY SYSTEM [UGLS]

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

i. Are distance learners aware of library services available in the University of Ghana Library System?

ii. What are the library services and programmes available to University of Ghana distance learners?

iii. What is the level of IT or computer knowledge in accessing the UGLS?

iv. Can distance learners access library e-resources and other databases?

v. Are the information needs of distance learners adequately provided for?

vi. What challenges do distance learners face in accessing library services at University of Ghana Library System?