

# Resource Sharing and Networking among Schools of Nursing Libraries: Innovations for Research and Improving Health Services in Nigeria

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## *Abstract*

*Schools of Nursing Libraries are faced with the need to provide services to an increasing number of student nurses, and to cope with huge rises in the cost of books and periodicals. Resource sharing and networking is becoming the common desire and practice of every library, it is paramount to note that schools of Nursing library all over Nigeria need to speak a common language lest they tend to become isolated from each other and from the latest development available to them. To reposition these libraries, the paper suggest the shifting of emphasis from the traditional library practice of building personal collections to a modern attempt, to expand the availability of specialized, expensive, or just plain not-owned resources beyond the bounds of a single institution. Considering the benefits of resource sharing and networking, the study, then, proposed that it is time for the better equipped schools of nursing libraries to initiate a collaborative project leading to a start point toward a national health information network.*

**Keywords:** Resource Sharing, Networking, Nursing Libraries

## **INTRODUCTION**

The concepts of resources does not merely cover the collection, but all of the other major sources of information including services, functions, equipment and professional competences required to respond to variety of consumers of information (Jabr and Al-Harrasi,2011). The incessant growth of published materials in the present era, increasing cost of information sources, technological innovations that offer newer and better methods of information processing, retrieval and dissemination are some of the factors which have made resources sharing a necessity.

The developmental challenges of nursing schools in Nigeria form a contextual background to or discussion of the interactive role of nursing school libraries, which has the potential to assist with health services, environmental sustainability,



and the generation of new specialist knowledge. This study involves a survey of institutional co-operation and resources sharing between the selected schools of nursing in Nigeria. In Nigeria, where institutional resources are scarce, libraries can play a critical role in providing access to collection of and dissemination of information. Gbaje, (2007) had earlier said that the inability of the Nigeria government to stock libraries in the academic institution with relevant information resources had great implications for learning, teaching, research and development.

This is a serious implication for libraries, coupled with the fact that no library no matter its financial status, collection size and equipment is capable of providing all its users needs as a result of limitation and constraints. In the midst of these constraints and limitations, several factors promote the concept of resources sharing among health libraries. Prominent among these factors are:

- ❖ The massive expansion of information joined with the dramatic increase in use and values of information in a way that generate the demanded information society.
- ❖ The rapid growth of information technology that overwhelmed all aspects of life without leaving a path isolated from interfering in its performance or presentation.
- ❖ When speaking about health information, the idea of resources sharing leads to reduction of all around information cost, avoidance of any duplication in efforts or materials, and maximizing the accessibility, than the value of already accumulated information (Jabr and Al-Harrasi, 2011).

Resources sharing as a term used to describe organized attempt by libraries to share materials and services co-operatively so as to provide one another with resources that might otherwise not be available to an individual institution (Walden, 1999). In resource sharing, participating libraries need to come together and co-operate in two broad areas:

- a. developing the collection on shared basis
- b. developing service for exploiting such collection (Dhawan, 1999)

It is the common use by two or more libraries of each other's assets, whether they are staff knowledge, facilities and or information resources. Driven by prevailing circumstances, sharing of resources is the only option left for libraries in school of nursing.

Schools of nursing libraries exists to develop, advance and disseminate nursing knowledge, prepare nursing graduates to engage in evidence-based professional practice, and proactively influence public policy, thereby contributing to the health and well-being of individuals, groups and communities (<http://www.stfx.ca/academic/nursing/nuringobjective.htm>). That is why the basic nursing education programme in Nigeria is geared towards the learning needs of students, health needs of the community and society and the learning needs of the nursing students can only be attain when libraries attached to their institution participates in resources sharing.

Nursing education is faced with challenges due to rapid scientific and technological advances and information explosion of the century. These are placing strenuous demands on their institutional libraries thus necessitating a re-examination of the traditional role of their libraries. There is a general consensus that the traditional library tools are limited in their ability to cope with the high degree of information retrieval and dissemination and this has promoted the efforts to overcome such limitations through the use of versatile devices and equipment such as computers, telephones and so on. Hence, Okeesan (1993) opined that libraries will have to drastically modify their information handling techniques if they are to live up to expectation in the performance of major functions such as acquisitions, classifications, storage and retrieval of documents for effective information dissemination.

It is pertinent to observe that advances in telecommunication technology in this information age have led to the development of computer networks that allow access to vast amount of information services of the many computer networks that have been developed, the most prominent and widespread is the internet, a global network of networks, that enables computers of all kind to directly and transparently communicate throughout the world (Ajuwon, 2003). Singh & Jindah (2009) postulated that with an unprecedented growth in the quantum of knowledge worldwide and easy accessibility, Internet has become an unavoidable necessity for every institution of higher learning and research. Veltman (1997) earlier led credence to this when he opined that one of the paradoxes of human nature is that we frequently use new technologies to speed up old task rather than as tools to explore new possibilities.

A cursory look at the new digital world portrays the potentials student nurses will derive from the digital divide. The networking of libraries in health institutions is certainly a more timely and cost-effective solution in the short term, than attempting to concentrate on the individual building of library collections. Through networking student nurses will be able to visit databases, thereby also contributing to the strengthening of preventive health care and services. This will eliminate the problem of information poverty which is the most serious obstacles facing health professionals in the developing countries. Rahman (2004) enumerated the aims and objectives of networking and resources sharing as follow:

- ❖ To promote free flow of information resources
- ❖ To ensure better access to information resources
- ❖ To ensure maximization of information resources
- ❖ To save resources and avoid duplication of efforts
- ❖ To ensure faster provision of information and literature support of the users
- ❖ To facilitate reciprocal exchange of local publication.

The schools of nursing tradition is to integrate teaching, research, scholarship, and community outreach programmes to enhance the intellectual, social, spiritual, cultural and physical life of its constituents, hence the curriculum is the combination of biological and social science, humanities and professional nursing courses. The curriculum consists of academic and professional theory with nursing practice. While fostering critical inquiry moral reasoning, creatively, self directedness and a commitment to lifelong learning. So much attention has been paid to health information services, as with health care services so there is no nursing or health institution without a library or information center supporting their missions.

The health libraries or information centers faces the challenges of increasing cost, diminishing resources allocations, shortages of resources, and ever increasing expectations from the student nurses and these public for better information and services. Besides, a functional library is a sine qua non to the preservation and dissemination of nursing knowledge and to the forward march of nursing as a science. Libraries are considered as democratic institutions for education, culture and information which provide continuing and lifelong education and through a collection of knowledge, offer accurate information and current thinking on vital issue (UNESCO, 1991). Library services are geared towards motivating creativity and innovations for improving the status, quality and productivity of nurses and society in general.

In spite of all the advantages or benefits sharing and networking can offer, personal contact with schools of nursing librarians and visits to some of the schools of nursing libraries have suggested that there is a wide and perhaps incompatible variety of library practices and facilities in these schools hence the need for the study.

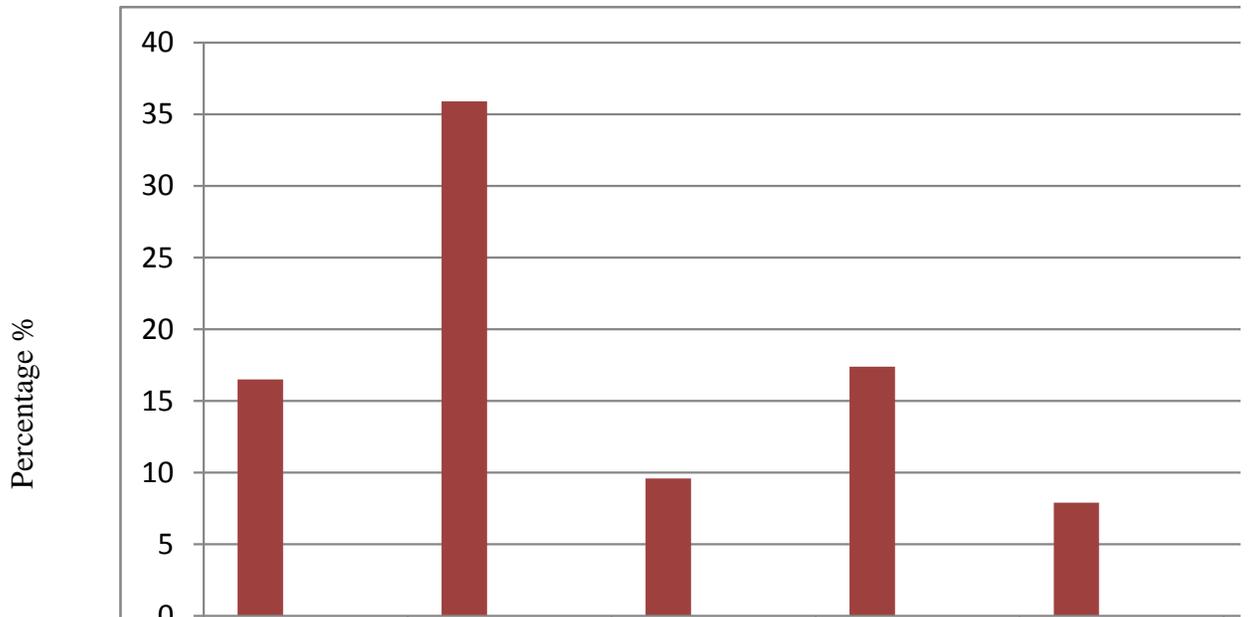
### **Methodology and Data Collection**

The survey research was applied to achieve the research goals and purposes, data were collected by means of questionnaires and observation. The estimated population for this study is 240 student nurses and library staff of selected schools of nursing in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria. From this population a sample of 178 was drawn using stratified and simple random sampling method. Population was first differentiated along the strata (i.e. two states Delta and Edo) and then limited to four publicly owned colleges of nursing in Delta (two) and Edo (two). However, the sample frame is as shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Names of institutions and total questionnaires administered**

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Sent</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Return</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
State school of nursing University of Benin teaching hospital, Benin city.	User / librarians	60	25	42	17.5
State school of nursing General Hospital Benin City.	Users / librarians	60	25	40	16.7
Delta State school of nursing Warri	Users / librarians	60	25	52	21.7
Delta State school of nursing Agbor	Users /s librarians	60	25	44	18.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>74.2</b>

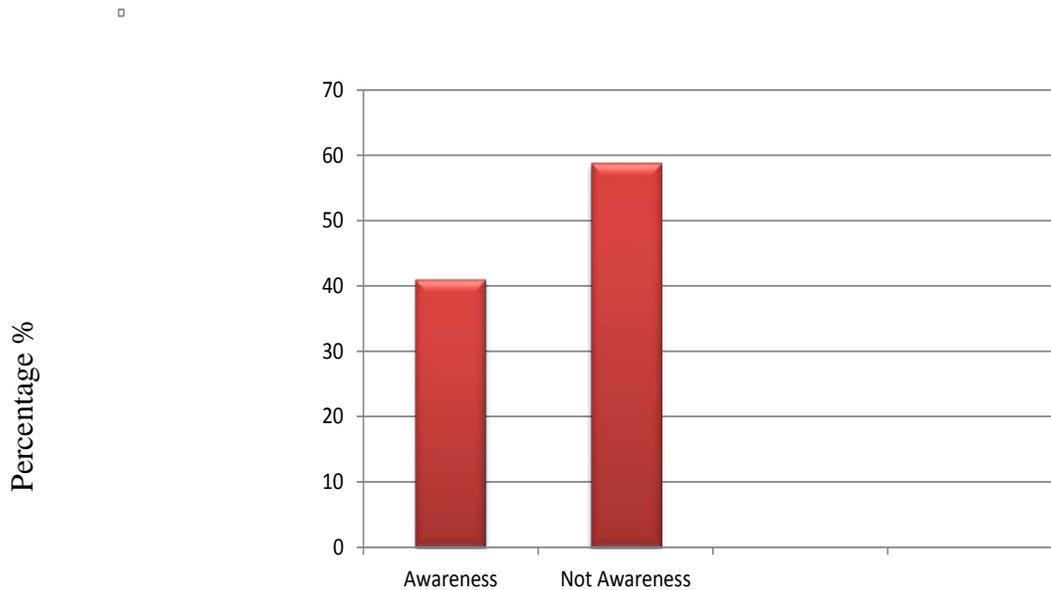
**Table 2: Types of materials used by respondents**



The survey results have shown that 35.9 percent of the respondent's use books and journals, 17.4 percent are the frequent users of E- journals, 16.5 percent and 12.4 percent uses books only and audio visual materials respectively. The researchers would like to mention that in a country like Nigeria, where libraries are not well funded, libraries found it difficult to take an active part in the new information age and offer new services.

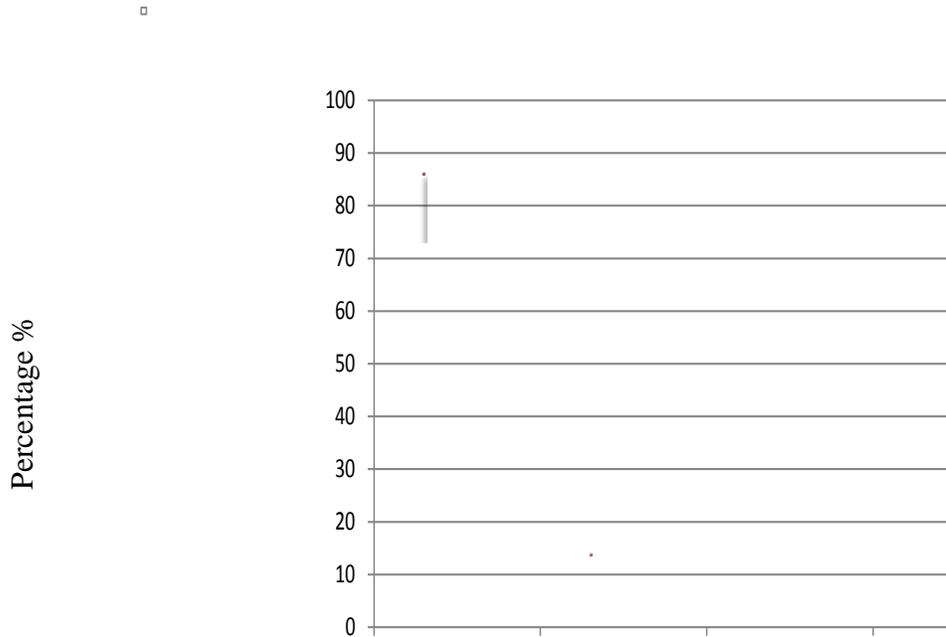
Hence, their collections are dominated by print media which automatically influence the choice of materials used by the respondents. Books constitute a significant percentage of the libraries collections and it was also observed by the researchers that none of the libraries under study have embrace resource sharing and networking activities.

**TABLE 3: Users Awareness of Resource Sharing and Networking Activities**



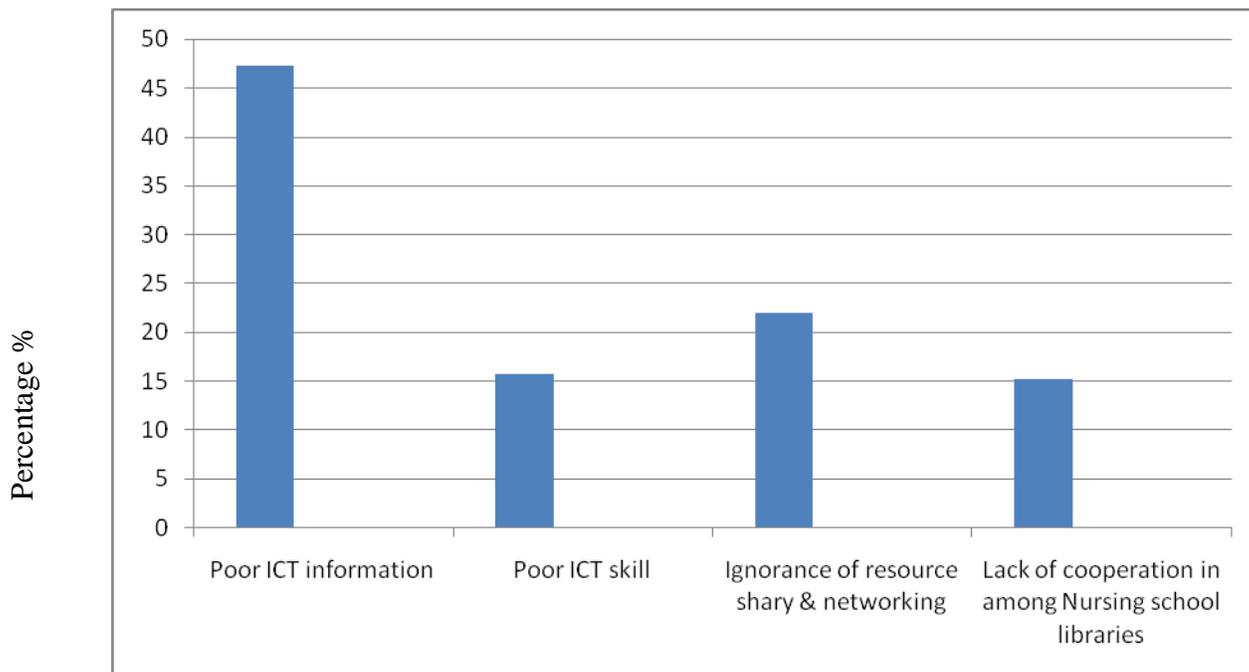
The study also shown that 58.9 percent of the respondents are not aware of resource showing and networking activities in their libraries while, 41.1 percent claimed to be aware of such services. This study corroborated with Ejedafiru, (2010) whose study confirm that the poor state of ICT infrastructures in Nigeria is likely to contribute to the development of an inefficient use of electronic information resources by student nurses, student nurses needs access to accurate, pertinent and timely information in order to excel academically and in the long run provide the highest quality of care. This can only be achieved when libraries attached to schools of nursing are networked to share resources.

**TABLE 4: Resource Sharing and Networking can Improve Health Services**



It is also observed that 86.2 percent of respondents agreed that resource sharing and networking activities can improve health care services. While 13.7 percent disagreed, Nursing Schools Libraries need access to a large range of information resources through sharing networks. Computer Networks provide a variety of ways for nurses to communicate and exchange information including searching for and retrieving data from distant sites. Marketing the already costly available health information will help creating a healthy society too (Jabr and Al-Harrasi, 2011). Brown (1999) presents the advantages of on-line library access and internet resources and challenges educator to ensure that students learn to locate and evaluate information carefully. She asserted that it is critical that educators assist nursing students in becoming comfortable, proficient and knowledgeable users of this kind of communication.

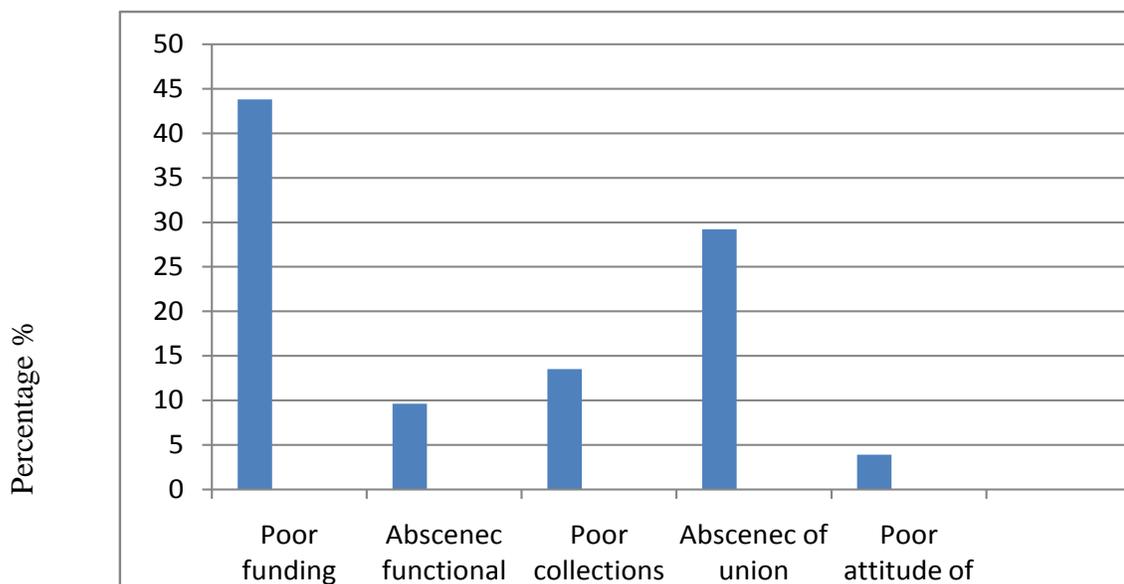
**TABLE 5: Inability to Access Information through Resource Sharing and Networking Activities.**



A functional resource showing library network can only be attained through technology. There is no denying the fact that ICT has brought a paradigm innovation in the functionality of the libraries in Nigeria but this technological innovation pattern is not seen uniformly across the wide-section of the libraries in this country. Hence Simpson (2006) postulated that “despite a wealth of studies showing how information technology (IT) improves care, makes the workplace better for clinicians and reduces costs, nursing has been the slowest constituency to accept it. This could be tied to the fact while 47.2 percent of the respondents cited the poor state of ICT infrastructure as a reason for their inability to access information through resources showing and networking. This is in line with Eghu, 2009, Requayyatu, 2010, Ejedaturu, 2010 whose studies have confirmed the poor state of ICT facilities in higher institutions in Nigeria. Ignorance of resource sharing and networking comes next with 21.9 percent of respondents while, poor ICT skills and lack of cooperation among nursing school library comes next with 15.7 and 15.2 percent respectively. Chastain (2002) makes relevant concluding discussions stressing that nurse

educators and nurses must not risk becoming obsolete due to lack of information technology abilities and emphasizes that nursing curriculum must incorporate technology in the classroom and in practice to meet the technology needs of today. The introduction of ICT to networking in libraries, has brought about a great transformation from the traditional approach to a modern approach.

**TABLE 6: Inabilities of Schools of Nursing to Satisfy Users Information Needs.**



We are living in a time where a library's worth is increasingly being measured by the services it offers in terms of helping clients to access universal information rather than its respective collections (Song, 2000). On this note, respondents were asked to respond to the inability of their libraries to satisfy their information needs. However, 43.8 percent cited poor funding of the libraries as a major setback. The increasing demand and relevance of tertiary education which the nursing schools are part of, have resulted to critical crisis revolving round funding and financial management issues, which authorities consider as the biggest problems confronting tertiary education in Nigeria (Okebukola, 2004, Akpotu 2005, NUC, 2005, Akpotu and Akpochafo, 2009, Ejedafiru & Akporhonor, 2011). The legions of problems in nursing education system such as inadequate infrastructural facilities for a modern day teaching research, absence of union catalogue, functional library building, poor collections, poor attitude of library staff, epileptic electricity supply and excessive work load for librarians and student nurses revolve

round the twin problem of poor funding and poor management of the scarce available resources. It was also observed by the researchers that there have not been any comprehensive institutional efforts to address the libraries in these situations. In other words, the crucial relevance of a network library services at every level and at every stage of effective care delivery has never been addressed nationally.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In a developing Nation like Nigeria, steps are being taken to enhance quality assurance through the various boards. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTC) firmly addressed the issues and challenges within colleges of education, polytechnics and monotchnics.

The NBTC recognizes the need to ensure that our higher institutions are at par with standards worldwide, to ensure the production of graduate nurses and research development that will be globally competitive. It is in this regard that all stakeholders have been emphasizing that technology should play a leading role in mounding nursing and all other health institutions within the country.

With the explosion of knowledge and constraints on the financial resources of these libraries, the resource sharing networking has emerged as an important alternative. Hence, the researchers agree with Kaul (2001) who posits that:

*The information technology has facilitated the resource sharing among the institutions located in different geographical areas. It enables the participating libraries to obtain materials from each other may be the list of books, indexes, and abstracts of required articles, facsimile copies of required pages or documents, charts, figures, graphs, drawings by using computer terminals attach to a large or very large network system and data bases coupled with network system and data bases with visual display units (VDU) and attached with the printing facility. Information can be scanned first on the screen, and if required, relevant information can be obtained in the print form.*

The need to network every library is rapidly becoming a key component of medical education in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Student nurses constitute one part of the society, who should be fortunate to have access at no cost to themselves, to a variety of information resources, as the

saying goes information is power. We are living in a time where the level of utilization of information resources has become the yardstick to determine a country's economic advancement and strength (Song, 2000).

This is measured by individual capability to effectively use information, besides access to information is a fundamental right of all patrons in Nigeria. It is also pertinent to note that resources showing networks services supplement and greatly expand local collections, remove geographical barriers (Ejedafiru, 2011). It is a truism that information poverty is one of the most serious obstacles facing nursing students and health professionals in general. Resource sharing network not only significantly shorten this time-lag, but it can also open up a whole new range of information resources to nursing student and health professionals in Nigeria.

The networking of libraries in health institutions is certainly a more timely and cost-effective solution in the short-term, than spending all resources in building and development of physical libraries and individual collections. This study therefore recommend the following:

- The encouragement of proprietors of health institutions to provide and sustainable funding?
- The establishment of Network libraries and campus-wide wireless connectivity:
- Computer acquisition scheme for staff and student nurses.
- Upgrade of websites and bandwidths video, driven lectures
- Information of libraries and national network services?
- Provision of alternative power supply
- Building of a critical mass of ICT proficiency and competencies.
- Employment of competent and qualified professional librarians to man the libraries.

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