



THE ROLES OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS IN THE INFORMATION LITERACY COMPETENCE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

Christy Olabisi Adeeko

Head Library,
Gateway (ICT) Polytechnic, Saapade, Oderemo,
Ogun State, Nigeria

bisiadeeko@yahoo.com

Fredrick Olatunji Ajegbomogun

Principal Librarian,
Nimbe Adedipe Library
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria

ajegbomofred@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study was designed to examine the role of libraries and librarians in the information literacy competences of undergraduate students in selected universities in southwest, Nigeria. The survey method was employed for the study while questionnaire and interview were also used as research instruments. Out of 1,100 copies of questionnaire administered, 810 (73.6%) were returned and used for this study. Data collected are analyzed using descriptive statistics analysis. The findings revealed that only one out of the three universities studied has information literacy instruction as a credit course. The finding reveals further that emphasis is placed on library literacy and not on information literacy as a whole and that information literacy is not integrated fully into the school curriculum. The finding shows that university libraries and librarians are not taking active roles in the teaching of information literacy. Recommendations of the study include full integration of all aspects of information literacy into the curriculum with the collaboration of libraries and faculties. Also, information literacy should be taken as a credit earning course.

Keywords: Information literacy, Library literacy, Information literacy instruction, Libraries, Librarians, Southwest Nigeria.

Introduction

No other change in the society has offered greater challenges than the emergence of the information age. In an information society, people have the right to access information that can enhance their intellectual development. Information has been defined as a set of abilities requiring individual to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate,



evaluate, and use effectively the information needed (ACRL, 2000). It has also been defined as a self empowering attitude and commitment by individuals and people, at all levels of society, to seek, access, analyze, translate, transform and create knowledge to solve problems to achieve personal, social, occupational and learning goals for the improvement of quality of life (IFLA/ALP, 2007). Information literacy skills are a fusion of library literacy, computer literacy, media literacy, technological literacy, critical thinking, ethics and communication which when acquired would empower individuals to become independent life-long learners (Parang, Raine and Stevenson, 2000). Information acquired would help individuals to apply knowledge from the familiar environment to the unfamiliar.

The phrase, “information literacy” first appeared in print in a 1974 report by Paul G. Zurkowski, written on behalf of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. Zurkowski used the phrase to describe the "techniques and skills" known by the information literate "for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems". Boyer (2000) recognized information facilitating the empowering role to foster educational development. He stated that “information is, in fact, our most precious resource. Roth (2000) aptly describes the current information environment and the pitfalls facing college and university students. “With the explosion of information generated and stored, the unregulated sprawl of the Internet, the shift from printed materials to an image-based culture development of sound and video archives, and the ease of seemingly infinite reproduction of words and pictures through electronic media, the pitfalls for college students have multiplied geometrically...individuals who are knowledgeable about finding, evaluating, analyzing, integrating, managing, and conveying information to others efficiently and effectively are held in high esteem.

Based on the above assertion, it is obvious that users of information resources must possess requisite skills in order to harness information resources at their disposal. Scholars believed that students, workers, and citizens who are most successful at solving problems, providing solutions, and producing new ideas and directions for the future are those acquitted with information. Any information literacy instruction programmes introduced by faculty staff or librarians is to help students develop skills to enable them recognize various sources of information and use it for advancement. Today’s students, then, can benefit throughout their lives from learning a process for becoming information literate, that is, acquiring the skills required to intelligently and systematically find, interpret, select, evaluate, organize, and use information for a specific purpose. Within the college or university environment, it is also important for students to be able to build upon the foundation of information literacy knowledge by successfully transferring this learning from course to course, understanding the critical and empowering role of information in a free and democratic society, and demonstrating ethical behavior and academic integrity as consumers, as well as producers, of information (Roth, 2000).

It is believed that students who are most successful are those who can most efficiently access information, critically evaluate it, interpret it and most effectively and ethically apply it. Undergraduate students today face explosion of information resources and the challenges of using these resources effectively. Research have shown that most undergraduate students are not information literate, hence they face challenges in critically evaluating and interpreting information needed to pursue their academic careers. Also, most universities do not offer helpful



information literacy programmes, hence students are not educated on how to access and effectively use information. Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University (2001) reiterated that undergraduate education should be designed as a continuum that prepares students for continued learning and professional work through developing their talents to formulate questions and seek answers. In view of the foregoing, the study assessed the roles of libraries and librarians in information literacy competences of undergraduate students and the resources for which information literacy instruction is provided by the university libraries in selected universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the resources for which information literacy instruction is provided by the university libraries in teaching information literacy skills.
2. To assess the effectiveness of information literacy programme instructions offered by the university libraries.
3. To find out the instructional methods offered by the university library to teach information literacy skills.
4. What are the roles of the university library in inculcating information literacy skills to the undergraduates.
5. What are the roles of the librarians in teaching information literacy skills .

Literature Review

The academic library plays an important and active role in the field of scientific research as a starting step and is one of the basic elements that support educational organizations in achieving their objective related to scientific research, quality development, rehabilitating searchers, and knowledge development (Badder and Abdulhadi, 1987). Information programmes at college and university libraries provide course related instruction, tutorials and other interventions to support student development of information literacy skills. In a growing number of institutions, information literacy is formally integrated into the curricula of general education and the majors (Rockman, 2002). This apparently helped students to perform excellently well in their academic pursuit,

Onwusu-Ansah & Edward (2004) in their research work on placing the academic library in the center of a comprehensive solution in information literacy and Higher Education provide a comprehensive answer to the question of what the role of academic library and librarian should play in achieving information literacy on campus. They reported that information literacy permeates the discourse in colleges and universities in the United States, and accrediting bodies its necessity, academic libraries prepare to assume duties, their own professional associations brought to the attention of a nation seeking new results in higher education, compelled to address issues and provide solutions that may go beyond their library walls and even infiltrate the domain of subject faculty. Academic leaders, in the course of engaging librarians and subject faculty in the search for solutions, frequently try to please both by encouraging librarians to try what they can while avoiding the potential wrath of subject faculty by refusing to delineate or mandate any new requirements.



Unfortunately, little gets done in many instances. Librarians, doubting their ability to achieve any far reaching results and conceding the human, and monetary resources to proceed with any ambitious programs, often attempt limited solutions or, worst still, continue to debate the purportedly unresolved nature of information literacy. Wilkinson (2001) supported an increasing need for resource-based education, which multiplies required resources and complicates access and evaluation. In Wilkinson's view, students, in such an environment, had to learn skills for retrieval, evaluation, and use of the growing information and knowledge they must acquire and use in a research-centered learning environment. The development was troubling for all constituents of the academic enterprise as academic libraries, seen predominantly and exclusively as providers of support services now appeared to be entering territory that had hitherto been the domain of subject faculty. This was infiltration by a group never really considered legitimate faculty members, not even when its members had that official status (Wilson, 2000). The unease and dilemma for librarians, administrators, and conventional teaching faculty remains a hurdle to be overcome.

Yet, regardless of what the rest of higher education saw as the librarian's contribution in the educational enterprise, it was library associations, library affiliated institutions, and their advocates who brought information literacy to the attention of the nation. Librarians were the most familiar with the issues at stake. They were higher education's information brokers and experts. A greater part of the goals that information literacy sought were goals on the library's turf. Librarians were the most prepared by virtue of their training, professional inclination, and commitment, to initiate the processes, supply the expertise, and define the framework within which those goals could be accomplished; appearing as the ones most committed to that goal.

The academic library was thus the natural venue for designing solutions toward information literacy in the academic arena. But those solutions could only produce desired results if the library approached information literacy as a campus-wide necessity. With prevailing practices that left some students out and repetitively engaged others, the deficiency of existing systems of library instruction could not be sincerely denied. Any far-reaching solution had to be comprehensive and diversified. An integrated approach with a programmatic arrangement that avoided haphazard distributions of engagement and ensured an organized plan for engaging the entire student population at one time or the other of their college attendance could ensure that comprehensiveness and diversification. For academic libraries, accepting such a responsibility not only expresses an educational concern for the future of students and society, but also represents a recognition of the utilitarian foundations upon which the very raison d'être of academic libraries may eventually be predicated (Crowley, 2001).

To assert that the library needs, a distinct approach coming out of its own institutional setting and depending primarily on its resources is not to reject the need for a holistic solution. Some writers have suggested a distinct separation of functions in information literacy education, insisting that librarians teach generic skills, while subject faculty teaches subject-specific skills. Debbie Orr, Margaret Appleton, and Margie Wallin, relying on Christine Bruce's seven faces of information literacy. They concluded that information literacy had to be taught cooperatively between librarians and faculty (Wallin & Appleton 2001). They did not however specify who should do what. Grafstein (2002) on the other hand, argued that librarians should teach generic information literacy skills, while subject faculty imparted information literacy skills that are



embedded within the research paradigms and procedures of their disciplines. Grafstein's argument appears akin to shadow boxing. No proponent of information literacy ever imagined librarians teaching subject content and its implications or required that the business of higher education be renamed information literacy. Information literacy was a response to concrete developments. To address it outside the context of those developments and what it was designed to remedy does not do justice to the phenomenon. Although some may argue that librarians are not equipped to teach all that some ambitious, and occasionally overreaching, definitions of information literacy require, librarians can rightfully aspire to teach or facilitate information literacy within the context of the developments that brought to the attention of a nation the concept as a concern, a movement, and preoccupation.

Owusu-Ansah (2001) submitted that to operate as a teaching department, the right of academic librarians to teach should be conceded and their credentials for that role acknowledged. However, although some writers do see and advocate a teaching role for the academic librarian, others wonder if the library should be involved in active teaching or have any direct instructional roles. Julien (2000) revealed, in a national survey of information instruction in Canadian academic libraries, that trends in teaching objectives, methods and content have witnessed little change in the past five years. She added that instructional librarians continue to face numerous challenges, particularly with regard to limited resources and faculty and student attitudes. The study also showed that information literacy instruction concentrate on research strategies, information evaluation skills, access to information sources, and using databases. Although, it is obvious that instructors have taken responsibility on how to teach well, and libraries have devoted significant resources to the instructional function, but there is remarkable level of apparent neglect of instruction in Canadian academic libraries.

Issa and Daura (2009) concluded that information literacy skills have not taken the desire firm root among university of Ilorin students. The little being presently taught involves mainly the librarians without the partnership of faculty members and the librarians. This problem, coupled with inadequate teaching aids, affect the students acquisition of skills. However, the students have acquired a certain level of information literacy, including technological skills as well as the investigative and critical thinking skills. Rasaki (2008) further stated that information literacy is the root to active participation in the information-driven society. It gives students the necessary skills and inculcates lifelong and independent learning skills which are prerequisite for problem-based and problem-solving society.

Methodology

The research design is survey type; questionnaire and interview were also used to gathered necessary information. The study was conducted in randomly selected universities in Southwest Nigeria (Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode). Out of 1,100 copies of questionnaire distributed, 810 (73.6%) were returned and used for this study. Data collected was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics.

Analysis and discussion

Table1: Selection according to universities and colleges/faculties

Institution	Population	Colleges/Faculties							Sample
		Agric. Sc.	Mgt. Sc.	Sc.	Edu.	V. Med	Hum	Eng	
FUNAAB	8,005	130	65	85	-	63	-	59	402
OOU	6,300	75	48	35	64	-	95	-	317
TASUED	4,651	34	41	25	61	-	72	-	233
Total	18956	239	154	145	125	63	167	59	810

The instrument was distributed among the seven grouped colleges/faculties in the selected universities. They are Agric. Science, Management Science, Natural Science, Education, Veterinary Medicine Humanities and Engineering. The selection of the respondents was based on quota sampling of 5% of sample size.

Table 2a: Showing the resources for which information literacy instruction is provided by the university libraries in teaching information literacy skills.

Table 2a: Information literacy instruction

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Catalogue	546	67.4
2	Printed books	585	72
3	Library use	573	70
4	Audio visual	183	22
5	e-references	279	34
6	e-books	321	39
7	e-periodicals	195	24
8	Internet/Web	369	45
9	Printed periodicals	225	27
10	CD/ROM	174	21
11	Databases	129	15

Table 2a reveals the resources for which information literacy instruction is provided by the university libraries and shows that the highest resources available in the three universities studied are printed books (72%) while the least resources available are databases (15%). This shows that emphasis is not placed on the procurement of electronic resources but on printed resources. This may likely have adverse effect on information technology advancement in some of these universities.

Table 2b: Students’ rating of resources for which information literacy instruction is provided

Students’ Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Poor resources	543	67.3



Good resources	207	25.5
Very good resources	60	7.4

Table 2b shows the rating of resources for which information literacy instruction is provided by the university libraries. 67% of the respondents indicate that the university libraries have poor resources, 25% agreed of having good resources while 7% of the respondents indicate very good resources. This implies that resources on information literacy instruction in the university libraries are poor.

Table 3: Information Resources Literacy

S/N	ITEMS	FUNAAB			OOU		TAI
		A	N/A	A	N/A	A	N/A
1	Catalogue	√	-	√	-	√	-
2	Printed materials	√	-	√	-	√	-
3	Library use	√	-	√	-	√	-
4	Audio visual	√	-	√	-	√	-
5	e-references	√	-	-	√	-	√
6	e-books	√	-	-	√	√	-
7	e-journals	√	-	√	-	-	√
8	e-periodicals	√	-	-	√	√	-
9	Internet web	√	-	√	-	√	-
10	Printed periodical	√	-	√	-	√	-
11	CD/ROM	√	-	√	-	√	-
12	Databases	√	-	√	-	√	-
13	Library bulletin	√	-	-	√	-	√
14	Display rack/notice board	√	-	√	-	√	-

A: Available, NA: Not Available

The following question was asked, which of this information resources literacy is provided in your library? Responses from FUNAAB indicate that university library has the following resources for which information resources is provided catalogue, printed books, library use, Audio-visual materials, e-periodicals, Internet/Web, printed periodicals, CD/ROM periodicals, database, library bulletin, display rack/notice board. Responses from Olabisi Onabanjo University reveal that library has the following resources for which information resources is provided; catalogue, printed books, library use in general, Internet/web and printed periodicals. While Tai Solarin University of Education reveals that the university library has the following resources for which information literacy is provided; catalogue, printed books, library use in general, e-books, e-periodicals, Internet/Web, Printed periodicals, CD/ROM periodicals and databases. This implies that FUNAAB could measure-up well in terms of instructional materials for information literacy.



Table 4a: Instructional methods offered by the university library

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Library tour	309	38
2	Printed books	546	67
3	Individualized instruction	348	42
4	Workshop training	225	27
5	Online search	345	42
6	Posters	258	31
7	Credit course	72	8
8	Non-credit course	192	23
9	Computer-assisted instruction	147	18

Tables 4a, reveals that instructional methods with computer based have low percentage of the respondents. 67% of the respondents indicate that printed books are used as instructional methods, 38% library tour, 67% printed books, 42% individualized instruction, 27% workshop training, 42% online search, 31% posters, 8% credit course indicates that information literacy is taken as a credit course which ought to have boosted students' information literacy skills. This shows that there is a very low level of using credit course method and computer-assisted instruction as an instructional method to teach the students.

Table 4b: Students' rating of the instructional methods offered by the university libraries

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	63	7
Good	135	16
Poor	612	75

Rating the instructional methods offered by the university libraries. 75% of the respondents indicate that the instructional method using to teach students was poor while 7% of the respondents agreed that instructional materials is available in the library. This infers that in the university libraries have poor instructional methods materials.

Table 5a: Showing the role of the university library in inculcating information literacy skills to the undergraduate students.

S/N	Methods of inculcating information literacy skills	Frequency	Percentage
1	The university library teaches students search skills in library catalogue.	543	67
2	The university library teaches students accessing skills for needed information.	564	69
3	The university library teaches students how to use the library internet site.	327	40
4	The university library teaches definition skills for needed information	390	48
5	The university library teaches research strategies skills in	252	31



	database		
6	The university library teaches access skills in library printed collection.	339	41
7	The university library teaches access skills in library electronic collection.	264	32
8	The university library teaches usage skills for periodicals indexes.	246	30
9	The university library teaches skills of using library services.	417	51
10	The university library teaches students how to evaluate information.	306	37

Table 5a shows the role of the university libraries in inculcating information literacy skills to the undergraduate students. 69% of the respondents agreed that the university library teaches students accessing skills for needed information. 67% search skills in library catalogue, 31% research strategies skills in databases and 30% usage skills for periodicals indexes having the lowest percentages. From the findings, it is obvious that emphasis is placed on the library literacy and not on information literacy as a whole.

Table 5b. Student rating of university libraries in inculcating information literacy

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	153	18
Good	279	34
Poor/Fair	378	46

Table 5b reveals the rating for the roles of the university libraries in inculcating information literacy to the undergraduate students. 46% of the respondents indicate that the university libraries are not taking active roles in teaching of information literacy, 34% agreed of good roles while 18% agreed of good roles. This indicates that in the students' opinion their university libraries are not taking active roles in teaching information literacy. The interviews also sought to clarify if information literacy is being taught as a credit unit course. Responses from FUNAAB indicate that a proposal has been written and the senate has already approved the proposal. However, library orientation has been going on for the past ten years. The librarians are making effort to organize workshop quarterly for the students on how to use electronic resources especially at the serials section of the library. The OPAC has been out of service for sometimes but the students are willing to learn. The librarians reported that it has commenced the teaching of information literacy under university general course studies (GNS). Responses from OOU indicated that library literacy course is taken as a credit course but there is no collaboration between the faculty and the library. The information literacy is on library literacy and computer literacy and the course is not taken by the librarians. This is a course that needs to be taught by librarians who have the skills and materials at their disposal to impact positively on the students.

Responses from TASUED revealed that information literacy is not taught as a credit course. But a proposal has been submitted, approved and expected to be implemented in the next academic session (2013/2014). However, library tour is the only instruction programme available for educating the students on library literacy. The credit course will be taken at 100 level and 200



level. The university administrator is working round the clock to ensure that information literacy instruction programme takes off since it will be beneficiary to the students.

Highlight of the Findings

The study revealed that:

- The libraries and librarians are not taking active roles in teaching information literacy skills and there is no collaboration between the libraries and the faculties
- The university libraries have more printed resources than electronic resources.
- Emphasis is placed on library literacy and not on information literacy as a whole.
- Information literacy is not integrated fully into the school curriculum.
- The findings of this study indicated that only one out of the three universities has information literacy instruction as a credit course.
- Information literacy is still at its rudimentary stage among the undergraduate students in the selected universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations for improving and encouraging information literacy is under highlighted:

- Information literacy should be integrated fully into the undergraduate students' curriculum of the universities and this must reflect in the library literacy, computer literacy, media literacy, technological literacy, critical thinking, and ethics which will empower the undergraduate students to become independent lifelong learners.
- The university libraries should pay more attention to offering various methods of information literacy instruction to students concerning practical aspect of information literacy, provide students with skills that enable them to access the needed information, and encourage them to increase library usage and benefit from printed and non-printed collections and services.
- Information literacy should be taken as a credit course and for at least 2 hours per week and should be a required or compulsory units course. The course should be taught up to at least 200 level and should be made a compulsory foundation course. This will enhance the status of the course and help students take it more seriously.
- Design and review of the curriculum and teaching of the information literacy courses should be all embracing. It should involve all the stake holders.
- Librarians need to emphasize the concept of the lifelong learning of information literacy skills for the benefits of undergraduates.
- They must prepare to give up less valued activities and institute new services and programs to enhance information literacy.
- There should be collaboration between the libraries and the faculties to inculcate information literacy skills at the point of admitting students into the university.



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