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#### LIBRARIAN-FACULTY COLLABORATION IN INFORMATION LITERACY INSTRUCTION: EXPERIENCES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF JOS LAW LIBRARY

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#### ABSTRACT

Information Literacy in various disciplines have served as a means of promoting critical learning and problem solving skills in the use of a variety of information sources for research. Collaboration between librarians and faculty is very important if success is to be achieved in implementing Information Literacy programmes. This paper presents preliminary findings on the execution of a web-based Information Literacy tutorial at the University of Jos Law Library. It seeks to explore the implications of sustained partnership in Information Literacy instruction as a key aspect of legal education in the institution.

#### Introduction

In the past few years, the role of the academic library has been re-defined to include a requirement for librarians to play a more active role in promoting student learning through Information Literacy (IL). Since its emergence in the 1970s, IL has been variously interpreted by different authors as a critical literacy skill for the 21<sup>st</sup> century which has been characterized by increasing growth in information sources in various formats. Theoretical understandings of the concept that have been expounded have emanated mostly within the higher education sector, prominent of which is the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) definition (ACRL, 2000) which defines the quality of an information literate person as one who has the ability to:

- a. Determine when information is needed.
- b. Access the needed information effectively and efficiently.
- c. Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base.
- d. Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
- e. Understand the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and access and use information ethically and legally.

The concept of IL has attracted the attention of educators, legislators, administrators and other professionals as an important vehicle for developing critical thinking and evaluative skills among students. Through the ACRL IL Framework (2000) and other models developed by experts, academic libraries in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the world have been able to develop learning outcomes, tools, and resources which have been deployed to infuse IL concepts and skills into their curricula with various successes recorded. However, one of the main challenges in the execution of IL

instruction programmes in educational institutions has been in the area of librarian/faculty collaboration. Essentially, the question of how enduring partnerships in transforming teaching and learning through IL instruction can be sustained between librarians and faculty.

# **Statement of the Problem**

In 2015, the University of Jos Law Library designed a series of web-based legal IL tutorials to assist students in the use of legal resources. Through this instructional programme which is undertaken in collaboration with the Faculty of Law, students are encouraged to have a more reflective approach to information retrieval, evaluation and use. These programmes also help ensure the optimal usage of legal information resources acquired in the Law Library. However, despite the progress made to develop student's competency skills through this programme, the challenge of effective partnership between the Law Library and the Faculty remains an issue of concern for the success of the programme. This article provides preliminary findings on the efficacy of legal information literacy instruction programme, the impact it has on students learning, and the various challenges experienced in the efforts towards effective collaboration with Faculty. It provides evidence-based practice of the fundamental role law librarians can play in providing more opportunities for efficient information skills development through IL instruction in collaboration with the faculty. The main objective of the study is to explore the implications for sustained partnership in IL instruction as a key aspect of legal education in the institution. The following are the research questions of the study:

- 1. What IL instruction programmes are carried out at the University of Jos Law library?
- 2. What is the impact of current information literacy training among law students of the University of Jos?
- 3. What strategies can be employed between the University Library and the Faculty of Law in achieving better results through collaboration?

# Significance of the Study

The increasing importance of IL in various disciplines in the educational sector has prompted further research as to how instructional programmes can be undertaken to improve student learning through collaboration with the various stakeholders. The significance of this study is that it highlights the importance of IL instruction by law libraries for law students which could help inform policy decisions on the value of collaborative partnerships between librarians and faculty in the execution of IL instruction programmes. The scope of the study is restricted to the University of Jos Law Library with the students of the Faculty of Law University of Jos as the study population.

# **Review of Related Literature**

#### IL and Librarian-Faculty Collaboration

Information literacy (IL) is central to student learning and is best addressed within a collaborative framework in order to provide the opportunity for a shared vision of the goals and objectives of an institution (Mackey & Jacobson, 2005; Novo, 2016). Collaboration between librarians and faculty has been recognised as one of the most essential ingredients for effective IL instruction. The growth in collaborative endeavours between librarians and teaching faculty in the effort to integrate IL into the curriculum is considered key to promoting student learning in HEIs (Lindstrom & Shonrock, 2006; Igbo & Imo, 2017). According to Asper (2002) and West (2013), collaboration can be undertaken at various levels and it could be either faculty-initiated or librarian-initiated; in this case, an indication for collaboration can be initiated by either of the two parties. The second level involves building a liaison relationship which enables the mutual exchange of information towards a joint effort in meeting a particular target. Collaboration could also include partnerships between the librarian and the faculty in the design, delivery and assessment of a particular subject discipline. Collaboration in this case would

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therefore involve building alliances especially at the planning stages of course development. Librarians can thus be resourceful in helping faculty assess areas of student information needs as they are better aware of the wide range of resources and research tools which can be integrated into course assignments.

However, despite the outlined importance of collaboration as vital to IL programmes, studies have shown that the debate surrounding issues of collaboration has had far-reaching effects on IL implementation initiatives in HEIs (Lindstrom & Shonrock, 2006; Cote & Juskiewicz, 2014). These issues have tended to create conflict between librarians and faculty especially with respect to problems of curriculum planning and design of instructional roles. Snavely and Cooper (1997) observed that even though IL instruction plays an important role in the learning process by way of enhancing the curricular and educational mission of an institution, librarians have found themselves competing with other demands in the effort to convince faculty and administrators of its relevance (Shanon & Shanon, 2016). Below are some of the conflicting issues:

- 1. Library-centric view of IL: The perception that IL is purely a library programme accounts for its slow penetration into institutional goals. Earlier perceptions of IL as mainly library-centred led to the initial disconnect between the librarians and faculty, especially with regard to instructional roles. This situation compels the need to de-emphasise this perception and promote IL as a holistic educational outcome of an institution in order for partnerships to be encouraged (Lampert, 2003; Cote, & Juskiewicz, 2014).
- 2. Another contentious area is the aspect of curriculum development where academic faculty is seen to have some measure of control and considerable influence on students and subject disciplines. Effective implementation of IL programmes must take cognisance of this as it has the tendency of arousing territorial disputes. Librarians should seek to advise and make recommendations where necessary and ensure that library goals align with those of the faculty for positive progress to be made through partnership in IL instruction (Curzon, 2004; Kissel, Wininger, Weeden, Wittberg, Halverson, Lacy, & Hulsman, 2016).
- 3. Similarly, the debate on the academic status of librarians in some institutions has also led to some viewpoints which perceive them as administrative staff thereby alienating them from educational roles. It is important that librarians are able to portray a clear picture of their educative role in library instruction so that faculty can better appreciate their responsibilities with respect to IL instruction (Cote, & Juskiewicz, 2014).

However, there have been a few examples of successful collaborative efforts which illustrate practical steps in bringing IL to students. Reed, Kinder and Farnum (2007) report on the collaborative effort undertaken between librarians and faculty to teach IL to undergraduate students at Ryerson University, Canada. Outcomes from the study indicated a strong interest in IL by the students as well as the unique contributions librarians make to issues surrounding IL that may not be obvious to faculty instructors. It also enabled librarians to have a better understanding of faculty expectations with respect to IL instructions. In legal education, the phenomenal growth of the legal literature resulting in a gradual shift from traditional print resources to electronic databases and the advent of Computer Assisted Legal Research (CALR) have necessitated a reconsideration by law librarians and academics of the need to inculcate effective legal research skills in students (Bast & Pyle, 2001). Ryskey (2007) in his study on undergraduate law students observes that due to the specialised nature of the field of law, mastery of legal information literacy skills by students would require more efficient collaboration. He argued that the depth of knowledge law librarians have of relevant databases in the legal field places them in a better position to impart IL skills to the students in collaboration with faculty.

Collaboration in IL instruction has also been shown to impact student's academic performance particularly with respect to research. Pautz and Gauder (2017) in their study which aimed at improving the quality of students' research projects in political science through faculty-librarian collaboration, observed that outcomes from the study indicated an advancement in students' research skills in the area of

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citing credible sources, academic coursework and overall learning. They noted that among the potential impact of team work in IL instruction is that it is more productive and librarians add value to the process. Developing strategies for assessment of IL instruction programmes has been a key area of concern for many libraries. The main challenge is that data from executed instructional programmes do not often reflect the breadth or depth of how libraries influence students and faculty. Bracke, Maybee, and Weiner (2016), advocate among other things, the need for access to students work and feedback from instructional programmes and partnership with faculties and departments to develop effective assessment strategies. Similarly, there is a need for training for the librarians on developing guidelines for collecting assessment data in order to determine the impact of collaborative efforts in IL instruction.

From this review, what is evident is the fact that IL entails sharing a mutual endeavour in which librarians must make a commitment to work with faculty by adopting various strategies such as regular communications, emphasising common values with respect to IL and marketing other library services that encourage better partnership with faculty. Creating awareness of the issues around IL also helps provide a strong support base for the library. Faculty needs to be enlightened of the concept of the information explosion and why IL skills provide the student with a strategic advantage for lifelong learning. It is therefore the responsibility of librarians to demonstrate the importance of IL to faculty and the need for critical thinking and problem solving skills for student's continued development even beyond the academic environment (Curzon, 2004; Igbo & Imo, 2017).

#### Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 100 level (total 100 students) and 300 level (total 110 students) undergraduate law students of the Faculty of University of Jos. A simple random sampling technique was used for the study. During the IL training programmes, students are usually issued with evaluation forms which are intended to provide the Library with relevant feedback on the content, information needs and general assessment of the training by students. The essence of this is to enable the Library make necessary changes as well as address any issues raised by the students on the instructional programmes. So far, training has been undertaken for various levels of students however, data presented in this study is limited to those collected from 100 and 300 Level students only due to the high response rate obtained during the trainings for this category of students. A total of 250 evaluation forms were distributed to the students and 182 were completed and returned.

#### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

In the presentation, data were jointly presented for all the students. Analysis and discussion from the data provides findings with respect to the research questions earlier raised in the study.

Table 1: Gender and Level of Study of the Respondents			
Gender	Number	Year level	Number
Male	106 (58%)	100 Level	78 (43%)
Female	76 (42%)	300 Level	104 (57%)
N=182			

Demographic profile of data on Table 1 above shows the gender and year level of the respondents with 58% as males and 42% as females in terms of gender, while 300 level students were larger with 57% and 100 level with 43%. The higher percentage of the 300 level students was as a result of the continuous training received by them as compared to those in 100 level, who were just at the entry level.



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Table 2: Usefulness of Training Received by the Respondents		
Response	Number	%
Yes	177	97%
No	0	0%
No response	5	3%
Total	182	100%
N=182		

N=182 Responses as to the usefulness of the training on Table 2 above shows that 97% of the students indicated that the training was helpful to them, which suggests a general positive response as to the

potential impact of the training on their research practices.

Web resources	Number	No response <sup>1</sup>
Legal information resources	52 (29%)	130 (71%)
Electronic databases	58 (32%)	124 (68%)
Legal writing and legal research	52 (29%)	130 (71%)
Searching for information on the	42 (23%)	140 (77%)
Internet		
Referencing and citation	41 (23%)	141 (76%)
Open access resources	37 (20%)	145 (80%)
All of the above	99 (54%)	80 (44%)
None of the above	5 (3%)	177 (97%)
N=182		

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Based on the questions in the evaluation forms, respondents were invited to tick from the available options of the tutorials any aspect that they found most helpful from the training. From the data in the first column, 54% stated that all components of the tutorials were helpful to them. Other respondents identified specific tutorials such as "electronic databases" (32%), "legal information resources" and "legal writing and legal research" 29%, respectively. Responses also indicated "searching information on the Internet" and "reference citation" at 23% respectively, while open access resources reflected 20%. Only 3% indicated that the training was not helpful to them at all. The importance of this data is that they provide useful insights as to the relevance of each of the components of the tutorials to student's research processes.

Question 3 on the evaluation form also requested students to indicate areas from the tutorial in which they felt they would need more training. Table 6 below shows "legal writing and legal research" had the highest response of 44%, "electronic databases" 26%, "reference citation" 31% while 24% indicated that they needed more training in all of the tutorials. The data on this table thus provides direction as to the aspects of the tutorials that need more emphasis in future training sessions for the students. Furthermore, based on these findings, the Law Library can also seek to create more opportunities for collaboration with the Faculty by which training sessions can be organised to assist students with their research skills.

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Table 6: Areas of Need for More	e Training by	the Respondents
Web Resources	Number	No response
Legal information resources	38 (21%)	144 (79%)
Electronic databases	47 (26%)	135 (74%)
Legal writing and legal research	80 (44%)	135 (74%)
Searching for information on the Internet	35 (19%)	147 (81%)
Referencing and citation	57 (31%)	125 (69%)
Open access resources	33 (18%)	149 (82%)
All of the above	43 (24%)	139 (76%)
None of the above	5 (3%)	177 (97%)
N=182		

Table 7 below shows students' responses as to whether they would recommend this training to their fellow students. The data shows that 99% were willing to recommend it to others which suggest a generally favourable perception of the IL training programme by the students as to its impact on their academic activities.

able /: Recommen	idations on the 1	raining by the Respo
Response	Number	%
Yes	180	99%
No	0	0%
No response	2	1%
Total	182	100%
N=182		

# Table 7: Recommendations on the Training by the Respondents

The last question on the evaluation form requested respondents to rate the training programme on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being lowest and 5 highest on the scale. The importance of this question was that it would provide the Law Library the opportunity to assess how effectively the goals of the IL training programmes were met based on the student's input. Outcome from responses indicated that 43% rated the training "high", 23% as "average" while 26% rated as "highest" as shown on table 8 below.

Table 8: Rating of Training by the Respondents		
Rating	Number	
Lowest -1	2 (1%)	
Low - 2	4 (2%)	
Average - 3	47(26%)	
High - 4	76 (43%)	
Highest - 5	46 (26%)	
No response	4 (2%)	
N=182		

#### **Discussion of the Findings**

In discussing the findings to this study, focus is placed on addressing the research questions of the study and the literature reviewed. Information literacy initiatives at the University of Jos had earlier been undertaken through the general bibliographic instruction programme known as General Studies (GST 104). However, the realization that the one-shot approach does not provide librarians the opportunity to make a lasting impact on students' skills led to more course-oriented strategies by which continuous IL skills training and awareness programmes are organised for all faculties and departments of the

institution. Librarians in various subject disciplines have designed online information skills tutorials aimed at assisting students in the use of information resources in their respective fields in collaboration with faculties and departments as a way of encouraging student learning and research (Lawal & Akintunde, 2014).

The Law Library of the University of Jos serves the academic programmes and legal research needs of the Faculty of Law as well as other disciplines within the University. Over the years, it has been able to develop a growing collection of legal information resources that are aimed at providing support to teaching, learning and research in line with the mission and goals of the University. The resources in the Law Library comprising both primary and secondary materials, have grown significantly in the past few years to a total of over 10, 000 volumes, a significant part of which have been uploaded to the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). The growth and development of our legal information resources have been guided by a policy in accordance with the general Collection Development Policy of the University Library. The policy also provides the opportunity for us to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our collection and put the necessary measures in place in addressing areas of deficiency.

Due to changes in legal publishing and the demands of legal scholarship, access to resources in electronic format has become very important. The Law Library has licensed access to materials in a variety of electronic formats, including online subscription-based electronic resources, digital collections and also provides catalogued access to selected freely-available Internet resources. Access to foreign electronic databases such as Hein Online is available from the webpage of the University Library. In order to complement access to the foreign electronic databases and other local print resources in the Law Library, we also have subscription to two local legal electronic databases namely Compulaw and Legalpedia Pro which contain vast reference modules on Nigerian legislations that are currently in force and operate using search methods by which the user is able to access information through a keyword search. Other electronic resources in various disciplinary fields such as JSTOR, Ebsco Host database services, Oxford Journals and Science Direct, which may contain legal information are also available for use from the webpage of the University Library.

The University of Jos Library operates the subject libraries model which helps foster better relationship between the Library and clients by taking library services to them. This strategy also allows the evaluation and development of library services to be carried out jointly by users, especially lecturers and librarians. For the Law Library, the peculiar nature of law collections requires that its resources are properly organised to meet the specialised needs of patrons through the provision of efficient services. Among other things, the primary responsibilities of the Law Library to the Faculty of Law include the provision of reference services on the relevant subject areas of law to both staff and students and collaborating with the Faculty with respect to the needed information resources for course programmes in the Faculty.

The increasing growth of digital information resources to the Law Library challenged its responsibility to help instil more efficient research skills in students that would be applicable to the changing context of legal practice in Nigeria. The design of the web-based legal IL tutorial was therefore aimed at helping students engage in problem-solving, evaluation, critical thinking and other forms of interactive participation in the use of both print and electronic resources. According to Hook (2002) web-based tutorials are short articles that give generalized information on a topic and can be used to reach a broad range of learner groups. If well designed, tutorials can be useful when reference services are unavailable or when a user is accessing library resources online (De Palau, 2009). They are often interactive and enable the user to learn at their own pace and follow hyperlinks directly from the tutorial to find the resources being described (Hess, 2015). Hook (2002) further argues that in legal education, web-based instruction provides an ideal solution to teaching complex legal research skills. If properly designed, their multimedia nature helps reveal the conceptual framework of a particular topic, in this way,

the user can independently determine the required legal research skill to apply in order to find a solution to a given task.

The design of the web-based tutorial at the University of Jos Law Library began in 2013 when it became clear that the plethora of available electronic information resources in the Library required that beyond frequent library tours and teaching basic computing skills, our students must possess the ability to effectively search, identify, evaluate, and use information sources for independent research. Consequently, the design of the IL tutorials was essential in ensuring the development of mature and selfdirected learners. In designing the tutorial, the elements for each of the tutorials were determined by the Law Librarians. Input as to the content, design, format, layout, were also sought from the Systems Unit of the University Library, the Head of Subject Libraries, The Faculty of Law as well as staff of the ICT Directorate of the University. The designed tutorials are seven in number, namely: Legal Information Resources, Legal Research Databases, Legal Research, Search Strategy, Legal Writing, Legal Citation and Open Access Resources. Each of these tutorials aims at addressing different issues and deficiencies in legal information use. Since the implementation of the tutorial, regular IL training programmes have been organised for law students on the tutorials to help increase overall student engagement in the use of legal resources. The tutorial is available on the University of Jos Library webpage on this link: http://www.unijos.edu.ng/library/tutorials.php?node=tutorials Students can also go to the link and learn at their own time and pace.

Based on the outcome of the study, responses as to the usefulness of the tutorial have revealed that the IL training programme has influenced the learning processes of law students in the Faculty. These findings further underscore the role of the Law Library in exposing students to resources in more innovative ways that can enhance skills development and lifelong learning through IL. Similarly, the instructional programmes have encouraged partnership between librarians and the faculty as supported by the literature review (Igbo & Imo, 2017; Pautz & Gauder, 2017). As indicated from the literature review, developing strategies for assessment is a key factor for the successful implementation of IL instruction programmes. A major strategy is create greater awareness of the range of other resources (both print and electronic) that available in law, this is because most students tend to concentrate only on resources provided by their faculty in their research activities and are often unaware of the range of other resources. IL instructional programmes can therefore serve as a means of addressing student's information deficiency by encouraging more efficient research skills in collaboration with Faculty.

For the University of Jos Law Library, it is seen from the findings that the adoption of a usercentred through the design of the web-based tutorial was useful in helping to address current deficiencies in students IL skills. Librarians can therefore be useful in helping to design course contents in ways that encourage better interaction with legal information resources. The implication of these findings are that beyond level co-ordinators, other partnership opportunities can also be sought by the Law Library with lecturers who teach research methods courses in the Faculty which would further help students understand the complexity of information use and application when undertaking their final year project research.

Similarly, the Law Library could also seeking to collaborate with the Law Students Society (LSS) of the Faculty for opportunities to enlighten students about the use and importance of the tutorial and other resources available in the Library. This would help students appreciate the quality of our resources which have been carefully selected by librarians according to strict criteria for content, usability and relevance to the University's curriculum for their academic use. However, for these strategies to be successful, more professional development is required for subject librarians to imbue them with the needed skills for training students and developing assessment guidelines, this attract greater support from the institution and the academic community for the programme (Bracke, Maybee and Weiner, 2016).

#### Conclusion

From the study undertaken, preliminary findings from the experiential account from the University of Jos Law Library have strongly indicated that collaboration with faculty forms the bedrock for successful implementation of IL instructional programmes in the University which can be further explored for sustained partnerships in the future for the benefit of our students.

# Recommendations

Arising from the above conclusion therefore, the following recommendations are made:

- 1. Considering the expanding digital context of legal information resources, law librarians should be greater challenged as instructors and intermediaries in the use of information resources to law students.
- 2. Law libraries should adopt IL as a viable tool for the development of students' skills to conduct independent research especially in the changing legal information context of Nigeria.
- 3. Law librarians can also seek to work within the context of each course content, in collaboration with the faculty to develop new learning experiences for student and achieve better IL outcomes.

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