

Teaching Information Literacy Skills in Nigerian Universities: Whose Responsibility?

Abubakar, U. A.

*Science Education Programme, School of Technology Education
AbubakarTafawaBalewaUniversity, Bauchi
E-mail: umaraliyuabubakar@yahoo.com*

Isyaku, A. A.

*The University Library, AbubakarTafawaBalewaUniversity, Bauchi
E-mail: adisiyaku@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

Information literacy is an important programme in the development of effective teaching, learning and research in a university. It is considered to be the survival skill of any information society. It is receiving an increasing academic attention all over the world and as it was found to be an effective means for addressing issues of social, cultural and economical importance. This is a theoretical study. To that effect, this study examined the concept of information literacy and the processes involved in teaching it at the university level of education in Nigeria. It briefly discussed and pinpoints the parties to be responsible for teaching the skill in the university. Methods and skills needed in teaching were also discussed. Conclusively, that librarians and faculty should engage in collaborative teaching strategy in teaching the concepts. They should also acquaint themselves with the available models for teaching it.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

Information literacy skills are essential mechanism in all aspects of academic endeavours, those with the knowledge and skills have the potentials to over come the challenges posed by the exponential growth of Information in forms, size and sources. Information literacy is thus, required because of the on-going proliferation of information resources and the variable methods of access. As such, Individuals are faced with diverse information choices in their academic endeavours, in the workplace, and in the social and religious life styles. Information is available through community resources, special interest organisations, manufacturers and service providers, media, libraries, and the internet. Increasingly, information comes unfiltered. This raises questions about authenticity, validity, and reliability. In addition, information is available through multiple media, including graphical, aural, and textual. These also posed special challenges in evaluating, understanding and using information in an ethical and legal manner. The uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information indeed add to the large challenges in the environment. Sheer abundance of information and technology will not in itself create more informed citizens without a complementary understanding and capacity to use the information effectively (Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy, 2004). Therefore, it is pertinent to say that, information

has become a phenomenon which permeate pre-defined human. In some circumstances, it changes like a random access flood. In dealing with such a situation, faculty members, librarians and students must be aware of the existence of such trends to digital age literacy/visual and information literacy paradigm shift and learn how to shape it. Hence, developing lifelong learners is central to the mission of educational institutions, and is increasingly reflected in descriptions of graduate qualities, attributes or capabilities. It is disappointing to reveal that undergraduate students in the Nigeria universities are not performing creditable as it is expected both in learning and research during and after graduation. Albert (2010), argued that the consistent non employability of students graduating from our universities, due their lack of skills, is an indication that something is wrong with the system. This is inline with the observation made by Onwubiko and Asogwa (2011) that if students who graduate from our universities are unable to locate, syntheses and evaluate information, they will not have the skill necessary for survival in any field. The challenge facing the universities is to equip students with skills and knowledge that will enable them to live satisfying, productive lives in the world awash with information.

To alleviate the problem, Igbo and Imo (2011) cited September (1993) say that development of information literacy of students requires the marriage of knowledge, experience and skills of professional educators, academics and information professionals. By leading individuals to think critically, and by helping them construct a framework for learning how to learn, educational institutions provide the foundation for continued growth throughout the careers of graduates, as well as in their roles as informed citizens and members of the communities. Students should be able to select and transform information as our forebears selected and transformed wood and clay. These emergent learning needs points out to a return to the apprenticeship model, where students learn how to think and how to solve problems embedded in a wider functional context that is learning by doings (Mcphason and Nunnes, 2004).

The Need for Teaching Information Literacy

Advancement in technology, information is thus, increasing at an astounding rate that is not enough for librarians and faculty members to teach or expose students to the discreet chunks of information from traditional sources such as paper-based books or journals. Therefore it is pertinent to say that, we live in Information age where the amount of information in a variety of format, services provided, and the number of users accessing it to satisfy their needs is expanding at an unprecedented rate. In this complex world we have abundant information choices such as print, audio, visual, digital e.t.c. It is no longer an issue of shortage of information, but rather too much information, or data (Shenk, 1997 as cited in Deip, 2011), where people feel overwhelmed with overload of information. The ability to find, access and use information effectively has been recognised as a key issue for effective participation in the information age (Corrall, 2008 as cited in Deip, 2011). As such academic librarians and their counterpart at the faculty have a role to play even though there is the need for them to update their knowledge and skills both in theory and practically instructional strategies. Academic institutions have to undergo a variety of changes

to prepare students for their academic lives and productive futures (Snavely, 2008 cited by Deip 2011) Rockman (2004) cited in Deip (2011) reaffirms that individuals need to have the ability to locate, evaluate and access the sources of information they need. Therefore, teaching information literacy skills in the university environment would help in determining their level of performance and it would motivate them to commit to philosophical thinking with a sound reasoning ability in problem-solving situations. Information literacy is now regarded by government across the world as a core educational life skill, and schools have key role to play in developing students' information literacy (Herrings, 2004) Thus, in achieving these noble tasks, the Middle State School Commission on Higher Education (2003) suggests that formal lectures, discussion sections, library visits, writing, workshops, computer labs or with distributed learning technologies such as learning WebCT or blackboard should be incorporated .

Information Literacy

Virkus (2003) in a study on "Information literacy in Europe" captures the concept of information literacy and its approaches which he cited Bawden (2001), Bawden and Robinson (2001) who argue that the term 'information literacy' has been widely and confusingly used in the literature. A number of other related terms have also been used for the same, or similar, concepts including computer literacy (or information technology literacy, electronic literacy or electronic information literacy); library literacy; media literacy (or 'mediacy'); network literacy (or Internet literacy or hyper-literacy); digital literacy (digital information literacy); informacy. Also, it is helpful to distinguish between 'skills-based literacies', such as computer or library literacy, which essentially indicate a competence in handling information in a particular setting or context or format, and more general capabilities. These wider conceptions of information literacy stress capabilities beyond a simple competence in retrieving or communicating information. According to Virkus (2003), to deal with the complexities of the current information environment, a complex and broad form of literacy is required. It must subsume all the skill-based literacies, but cannot be restricted to them, nor can it be restricted to any particular technology or set of technologies, and understanding, meaning and context must be central to it.

No matter what the concept and practice of information literacy is, faculty members and librarians in the challenging digital age have a role to play in the promotion and integration of literacy skills in the school curriculum. Because information literacy is considered as a "key to lifelong learning", which includes computer literacy, information technology literacy, library skills, information skills and learning to learn (Ralph, 1999 cited in Bruce, 2003). Herring (2004) reveals that there exists a vast literature on information skills and information literacy therefore, teachers and school librarians seeking to improve their students' learning will benefit from examining both theoretical and practical approaches to developing information literacy in their schools. While to some, Information literacy is a set of skills designed to make the endless litany of information sources more manageable. This skill set includes the technical skills necessary to operate a computer and more importantly, the critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate and use the information (Springer, 2009 cited

ACRL, 2000). The information literate person has a basic understanding of how information is organized, how to retrieve information and how to contribute to online communities through e-mail and other communication resources. Therefore, these are skills that are very easy to teach. Rudimentary skills in database searching and Internet searching, analyzing websites for their reliability, and a basic competence in computer technology are indispensable skills for success in today's economy, and are indispensable element in the bridging of the digital divide. According to Bruce (2003), information literacy is the ability to access, evaluate, organise and use information in order to learn, solve problems, make decisions in formal and informal learning context, at work, at home and in educational settings. But to the view of Hancock (1993) as cited in Bucher (n.d) contend that information literacy is viewed as a resource-based approach to learning in the classroom, library media center, and community. Teachers and school library media specialists work together to provide students with a wide array of resources to solve problems. Diep (2011) stresses that the Society of Colleges, National and University Libraries developed a model rather than a set of standards. Non as seven pillars of Information Literacy describing Library and LI skills as fundamental building blocks in which the term "information skills" is used, rather than "information literacy". Libraries are dynamic institution that are constantly evolving and responding to wide range of digital technologies for transmitting information and to new strategies for interpreting that information. As such students needs to be guided so that they can understand the changing roles of libraries and librarians within the learning and research based institutions as well as personnel in the workplace.

Method of Teaching Information Literacy

A lot of information literacy models were designed and some have been tested as the baseline for teaching as well to serve as a mechanism for promoting information literacy skills in both academic and other institutions that require well refined and technical information for decision making. It is pertinent to present here that, information literacy is a central part in the development of lifelong learners which is a large part of higher education's goal. Information literacy is much more than technological competence or on-line research. Rather, it is a knowledge that encourages critical thinking and reflection in the context of increasingly extensive amounts of information that are now available through a wide range of technologies. Students today need the skills that will enable them to access and navigate the growing universe of information, to select appropriately the credible and reliable information, they needed to read critically and think independently as they produce their own ideas, and then to use that refine information for their academic courses (Middle states Commission on Higher education 2003). Mcphason and Nummes (2004) reveal that some scholars have considered cognitive apprenticeship as an effective means that would help in the actual presentation and active participation of students in learning with a test in their intellectual information search and applications. Simons (1991) as cited in Mcphason (2004) argued that paradigm shift in education and instruction demands for intellectual reasoning ability with skills of accomplishing tasks, rather than promote acquisition and memorization of facts and abstract concepts and theories. Instruction now means

improving the abilities of self-regulation of learning, thinking, intelligence and problem solving. Thus, instructors can clarify what they are attempting to teach if they place discipline and interdisciplinary connection in the foreground of discussion, and this reinforces the metacognitive value of information literacy process. For example, in the introductory courses the technique can illustrate the differences between professional and popular sources of information. In more advanced courses, students can understand the complex nature of information within various disciplines (Middle States Commission on Higher Education 2003). Doiron and Davies (1998); Russel (2006) as cited in Igbo and Imo (2011) posit that collaboration enhances effectiveness and efficiency in teaching methodology, providing room for meaningful contribution from the teaching faculty and librarians, allowing a more productive use of resources, application of educational technology for independent and problem-based learning. Collaboration for information literacy entails role relationships between the professional involved (Igbo and Imo, 2011). Hence, pedagogical approaches to teaching students to find and evaluate sources are distinct as individualised teaching styles, as varied as the disciplines involved or as common across disciplines as interdisciplinary relationship permits. Bruce (1999) developed a model of teaching and learning process and styles to be integrated into the curriculum for better attainment of organisational and academic excellence in academic institutions and alike. She called them the seven faces of information literacy. These are:

- a) The information technology experience
- b) Information sources experience
- c) The information process experience
- d) The information control experience
- e) The knowledge construction experience
- f) Knowledge extension experience
- g) The wisdom experience

Bruce (2003) affirms that these seven faces of information literacy, and their corresponding workplace processes, provide a curriculum framework for information managers with an interest in training and educating their clientele to effectively use the organisation's information services, and for providers of beginning and continuing professional education. Understanding more about information if effectively utilised by practising professionals is likely to help educators design curriculum which is relevant and transferable to professional practice. The way in which information literacy is experienced in the world of works should influence how it is taught and experienced in professional education and professional development programs. Computer laboratories and workshops can also provide an opportunity to demonstrate search strategies using specialized databases, web search engines, as well as how to use discipline specific research strategies and information technology... Both faculty members and librarians have a role in discussion about ethical and legal considerations, including intellectual property, plagiarism, copyright law, and the appropriate use of citations, quotations, and summarizing techniques.

Teaching Information literacy Skills

Teaching students how to find and evaluate sources of information should begin with assessing the students' skills and understanding of how to navigate the library and identify other sources. In addition, it is important for the faculties to provide some structures and criteria for identifying resources because, teaching students how to evaluate information found in print or electronic sources of information is a key aspect of information skills teaching (Herring, 2004). Herring (2004) also proposed the following challenging situations as a starting point for teaching information literacy in schools with a generalizing statement saying "as information literacy is now regarded as a key element in a students' education, it is important that all school staff are encouraged to think about the following;

- (i) What are information skills and why are they important?
- (ii) Who teaches information skills in the school?
- (iii) What information skills do students need when using the web?
- (iv) To what extent have the schools' teachers and school librarian thought about their own information skills?
- (v) How can students be provided with guidance on information skills on the school website?

It is clear that the global transitional challenges in information sources, refining and use required adequate skills among instructors. It is therefore pertinent to say that faculty members and librarians should examine their own information literacy skills and acquaint themselves with knowledge and skills needed to impart information literacy skills to students. Herring (2004) recommends that the use of PLUS model can provide a suitable way for the teachers and librarian to impart knowledge and skills of Information with the support and structure they need when using print and electronic resources in their assignments.

Faculty members-Librarian collaboration

Collaboration among faculty members and librarians is important for developing active learning activities and assignment for students to engage in this process. This type of collaboration could result in the following activities to begin the process:

- a) Librarians can visit classroom to discuss the organisation of information; electronic resources, library research methods, the differences among popular trade and academic sources of information; the content and credibility of sources.
- b) Librarians who specialized in particular disciplines also have a unique role in helping the faculties achieve their objectives for students learning in the major fields of study. To that effect information literacy supports the pedagogical focused on the development of effective research, critical thinking and writing or other communication skills. Most faculties can identify these key characteristics in courses they currently teaching (Middle states Commission on Higher education 2003). Information literacy (IL) is so important to higher education because developing a lifelong learning attitude is central to the mission of higher education institutions (Rockman, 2004 as cited in Deip, 2011).

The need for collaborative Learning among students

Collaborative learning, in which students work in groups to solve problems, perform laboratory exercise, or participate in projects, has positive effect on students information competency. As such, some collaborative groups using this teaching strategy should be structured. For example in "Jigsaw approach" the classes divided into groups and assigned a particular question about a topic to be studied. Students studying the same topic should be assemble into new groups to discuss how they will answer the question, complete the research, and discuss the results. You may then return them to their original groups to teach the other students the findings of their previous groups. In this way, every student learns one topic in depth and the other topics in a more general way. If the topic is Information literacy, each group in a class can explore a different question, such as the locating and accessing information from databases, how to select appropriate information sources, or how it can be prevented from plagiarism. The use of collaborative learning frequently can results in the increased achievement scores; long term retention, increased in conceptual understanding and more adopt problem solving ability. Students can also be motivated to engage in small group discussion about content of information that they have located from a range of sources. In this instance, the faculty members can evaluate the relevance of the issues raised to the course objectives and can ask probing questions. The librarian can assist in evaluating the discussion with a focus on the students' justification for their sources.

Challenges of Teaching Information Literacy in the Nigerian universities

The challenge in educating for information literacy despite the digital divide demands that resources be used to create learning activities that promote critical interaction with and understanding of the information environment (Moore, 2002). In the recent time, a lot is saying on the performance of university undergraduate and graduate students over their information literacy or competencies to address the challenging issues posed by information overload. As such, the effect on the academic institutions is profound. To meet the ever increasing demands for information literacy, librarians and faculty members need to acquaint themselves with the new trends. Even though, librarians and faculty members differ not necessary in knowledge but in other aspects on how the knowledge is organised and shared. The exponential nature and the demand for expertise in dealing with information in workplace as part of the employability criteria call for active and effective integration of information literacy education in the curriculum. In a research conducted in California, Oxford (2010) cited McAdoo (2008) says that accrediting bodies are increasing the amount of focus given to institutions of higher education and their abilities to meet society's expectations of creating graduates who move into the workforce that are information literate. It is imperative that all librarians and faculty members are information literate with the skill to impart and professionally assist their students who are also users of information to source, access, evaluate, synthesis and integrate it into their work for efficiency and productivity during and after graduation. Indeed, librarians should be active and bold in their profession to call for full coverage of the content of information literacy instead of the use of library.

The pathway for development of lifelong learning

Developing lifelong learners is central to the mission of educational institutions, and it should be increasingly reflected in descriptions of graduate qualities, attributes or capabilities in and outside the academic environment. Hence, the potential for learning knowledge and skills in the university is virtually a premise on the quality of the curriculum and competency of its recipients. Learning to learn is an activity of concern in all educational institution particularly university settings which demand higher order and skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation, the ability to think critically, to construct meaning and reconstruct understanding in the light of new learning experiences. Information literacy programme is central and inevitably help students develop into independent learners who construe and construct from the experience and much more readily than those whose focus is on the acquisition of a large body of knowledge. Therefore, information literacy education should create opportunities for self-directed and independent learning where students become engaged in using a wide variety of information sources to expand their knowledge, construct knowledge, ask informed questions, and sharpen their critical thinking. This approach is evident in the increasingly widespread introduction of student centred constructivist pedagogy such as inquiry based, problem based and resource based learning.

Characteristics of inquiry based and problem based curriculum design include an emphasis on experimental learning. In this model, a learning environment should be provided to enable students construct learning through asking questions and framing problems. Investigating and problem- solving, this activity should be created in an active and student driven learning situations with a strong implicit and explicit emphasis on effective use of information. In essence, information literacy builds a bridge between the traditional ways of instruction in which students are passive learners, instructors focus on providing students with a common core of concepts, knowledge and skills, and determine the learning outcomes, to a new learning environment that helps faculties promote active learning through teaching critical thinking. For instance, through their collaboration in teaching IL skills, librarians and teaching faculty provide students with intellectual abilities of reasoning and critical thinking by helping them to construct a framework for learning how to learn, and by helping them to nourish these skills throughout their careers and their roles as informed citizens (ACRL, 2000 cited in Deip, 2011).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It behooves the faculty members and librarians in the Nigerian Universities to address the issues of non-productivity of university graduates to achieve this, information literacy education should be emphasised within and outside the library field in a collaborative and multi-disciplinary approach. Doing this will create opportunities for more substantial increase in the performance of students in both learning and research throughout and beyond their academic careers. Information literacy education in the Nigerian Universities if properly handled would serve as a catalyst for determining productivity output of the Nigerian Universities since the faculties and librarians will be making much impact on the academic

reasoning and skill competencies of their students with a motivational zeal in them to actualize their talent in problem-solving. Consequently, Understanding more about information is effectively utilised by practising professionals who are likely to help educators design curriculum which is relevant and transferable to professional practice. The way information literacy is experienced in the world should influence how it is taught and experienced in the Universities. Librarians as information professionals should use the relevant knowledge in a collaborative approach with their colleagues from the faculty to enhance effective teaching, learning and research skills on university students. Doing this would keep pace of expanding students' information literacy skills in a collaborative approach as well. Faculty members and Librarians should be encouraged in organising information literacy awareness campaign and make a positive contribution to integrate information literacy education into the nation's university curriculum. Training and retraining on information literacy among the faculty members and librarians should be encouraged. Students must be equipped with skills to effectively and intelligently find, evaluate, manage, apply, create, publish and store, and retrieve information using both conventional research resources as well as digital tools, such as the Internet, that access very diverse databases of information.

REFERENCES

- Albert, I.O.** (2010). Filling functional Gaps in University Education in Nigeria. In Okojie, J et al (eds) 50 years of University education in Nigeria: Evolution, Achievements and Future Directions. published by university of Ilorin and National Universities Commission. P499
- Australia and Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIIL).** Retrieved on 30 December 30, 2011 from <http://www.anziil.org/>
- Bruce, C. S.** (2003). Workplace experiences of information literacy. FAGAMON International Journal of Information Management, Retrieved November 20th 2011 from www.mypdfsearchengines.com
- Deip, K. C.** (2011) A Conceptual Framework for Best Practices in Information Literacy Instruction Based on Stakeholders' Perceptions : case Study of Four Vietnamese Academic Libraries.(Unpublished doctoral dissertation) University of Hawaii, U.S. Retrieved December 31,2011 from ProQuest database.
- Hancock, V.E** (2003) Information Literacy for Lifelong Learning in Bucher, K. T. (n.d) the importance information Literacy Skills in the Middle School Curriculum, Retrieved on December 20, 2011 from www.mypdfsearchengines.com
- Herring, J. E.** (2004) The internet and information skills: a guide for teachers and school librarians. London, Facet Publication.
- Igbo, H. U. and Imo, N. T.** (2011). Librarians perceptions of collaborative Teaching as a strategy for imparting information literacy to undergraduate students of Nigerian Universities, in the Nigerian Library Association 49th National Conference & Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) From 10th -15th July 2011,Held at Akwa, Anambra State. Theme: Information for All, Strategies for National Development
- McPhason , M. and Nunnes B. M.** (2004) .Developing Innovation in online learning: an action research framework. London: Routledgefalmer.
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education,** (2003) Developing Research and Communication Skills Guidelines for Information Literacy Curriculum, United State of America, Retrieved www.mypdfsearchengines.com

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Higher Education** (2003). Developing research & communication skills: Guidelines for information literacy in the curriculum. Philadelphia, PA: The Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Also retrieved from <http://www.msche.org/publications/devskill050208135642.pdf>
- Moore, P** (2002). Analysis of Information Literacy Education Worldwide. White Paper prepared for UNESCO, the U.S National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and National Forum on Information Literacy, for use at the Information Literacy Meeting of Experts of Prague, The Czech Republic. Retrieved from www.nclis.gov/libinter/infolitcon On 22/04/2012
- Onwibuko, S.N & Asogwa, G.E,** (2011) Transforming Nigeria Undergraduate through Information Competency, Information Impact, Journal of Information and Knowledge Management, 2(3):60
- Oxford, R.L** (2010) Library 2.0 and Information Competency in California Community College Distance Education Programs Descriptive Study. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), California State University, Frasnoss. Retrieved December 30, 2011 from ProQuest database.
- Springer, C.D** (2009). Avoid a Tragedy :Information Literacy And the Tragedy of the Digital Commons. Library philosophy and practice Retrieved from <http://lis.sagepub.com/content/35/2/87.abstract> p.3
- Uchenna, O. C.** (2010). The Impact of ICT on the Administration of Mai Idria Alloma Polytechnic, Geidam, Yobe State, Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Culture*, 1(3), 128-129
- Virkus, S** (2003). Information literacy in Europe: a literature review, Information Research, Vol. 8(4) Retrieved on 30 December, 2011 from www.mypdfsearchengines.com