Information Literacy Skills, Information Ethics Observance and Use of Electronic Databases by Law Lecturers of Ambrose Alli University

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Abstract

Effective use of electronic information resources today is dependent on certain literacy skills and ethics. This research work examines the information literacy skills, observance of information ethics, and use of e-databases by Faculty of Law lecturers in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. Five research questions were formulated for the study. A descriptive survey design and total enumeration technique were adopted for the study. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire;36 copies of which were administered. Out of the total number of the research instrument distributed 33 copies representing 91.7% response rate were retrieved. The method of data analysis included frequency counts, simple percentages, means, and standard deviations. As Findings indicated, law lecturers' level of information literacy oscillated between 'very high extent' and 'high extent' with 100% of the responding lecturers being able to evaluate internet sources to a very high extent due to the availability of electronic databases in the university. It was also discovered that a high proportion of the respondents use electronic databases on a daily and weekly bases. The lecturers encountered a large mass of irrelevant information and difficulty in accessing some electronic resources, among other challenges. That all law lecturers should acquire requisite information literacy skills to navigate, access, and utilize the available electronic databases was recommended.

Introduction

Academic libraries exist to select, acquire, and organise information resources in formats to facilitate teaching, learning, and research by faculty, and students. It is quite exorbitant for libraries generally to financially acquire all print information resources relevant to her clientele as these information resources are rapidly produced and becoming increasingly abundant. The inability of libraries to acquire all the information resources makes it practically impossible for them to keep abreast of the evolving trends in their diverse area of interest. Hence electronic information resources constitute viable means through which libraries serve their numerous users.

With access to electronic databases, lecturers and students have access to different sources of information which will aid their teaching, research and academic performance as well as broaden their knowledge in the areas of specialty. "The use of online resources in university libraries is aimed at broadening the range of available information resources within the library" (Daramola, 2016). "The use of these resources," as Daramola (2016) further noted, "will not only add value to the content by making them accessible through digital means; lecturers, students, researchers, and the entire members of the university community can access them anytime and anywhere."

According to Naqvi (2012), an electronic database is a huge file of digitised information that is usually updated regularly. Found in such a file includes bibliographic records, full-text documents, statistical records, abstracts, directories, images, etc. that are connected to definite subject areas. The records which by design are in standard and uniform formats are organized to ease retrieval. Databases in electronic formats are organised and administered with the help of DBMS, that is, Database Management System software. It is customary for producers of databases to produce versions in print to be leased to vendors that will ensure access after the data has been transformed into machine-readable form through proprietary search software. Accessibility to these resources by users (lecturers) is employing electronic devices like the Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROMs) and Online Public Access Catalogues. In terms of access, the Internet provides a wide range of information by means of search engines, subject directories, subject gateways, and other web-based resources. Nonetheless, the ability of law lecturers to use these technologies as enumerated earlier depends on their digital literacy skills which in turn will determine their proficiency in probing the electronic databases to access information contained thereof.

In the view of Shariful (2012), "Electronic Information Resources (EIRs) are those resources that deal with both born electronic and digitised materials which can be either accessible from library's in-house database or the world-wide-web". Within the confines of the born electronic resources libraries include e-journals, e-books, e-magazines, e-newspapers, e-dissertations, e-thesis, e-projects, e-reports, www-resources and websites. These available resources are meant to adequately satisfy the various categories of users.

According to the 'Association of College and Research Libraries' (2000) "information literacy is the ability to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use the needed information effectively". Similarly, ALA (the American Library Association) states that "information literacy is the ability to recognise when and why somebody needs information, where to find and locate it, how to evaluate, use and communicate the information in an ethical manner".Information Literacy is the array of skills required "to find, retrieve, analyse, and use information."The 21st Century has been dubbed the "information era' as a result of the wide-scale multiplicity of information sources and information

generated. It is now practically difficult for one to achieve the target of planned studies without putting some basic information literacy skills to work. In other words, information literacy skills are required to equip the people with decisive literacy skills that will assist them to be independent life-long learners. This literacy skills will prime the people to apply their knowledge to any environment that is familiar or otherwise.

The importance of information literacy skills cannot be overemphasized as they equip students and practitioners with valuable insights which guarantees quality academic and research outputs capable of expanding career opportunities in the burgeoning information economy. It enhances users' search skills of finding, and accessing needed information through the use of Boolean Logic Operators such as AND, OR, NOT; as well as ability to analyse and evaluate search findings. Added to this, is the ability to blend legal and ethical issues with the use of information, appropriate citation, and referencing to acknowledge other people's work (Garner & Rugg, 2005).

The study focuses primarily on information literacy skills and electronic database use by Law Faculty members of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the corpus of knowledge in library and Information Science with particular reference to issues relate to electronic databases and information literacy skills.

Problem Statement

The use of electronic databases has instigated several research studies worldwide, and most of them addressed such issues that concern access, awareness, attitudes, satisfaction, and searching skills; while others also specifically focused on information literacy skills as correlate to the use of online databases. Many scholars in their studies suggested that additional research should be focused more on target groups of users within the academic community to have a balanced and clearer insight into the utilisation of electronic information resources. The Law Faculty of Ambrose Alli University is provided with a library that organises information-bearing resources, including a variety of electronic databases for law lecturers and students. As observed by the researcher, Faculty of Law lecturers of Ambrose Alli University are active users of the library. They are always in quest of legal information, especially legal reports, both foreign and local. It therefore becomes necessary to assess the lecturers' use of the databases, their information literacy skills and level of observance of the information ethics.

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to find out information literacy skills and online databases use by Law Faculty members of Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma. To adequately realize the main objective, the following specific objectives were formulated:

1. To find out the level of observance of information ethics by lecturers in the Faculty of Law,
2. To determine the level of information literacy skills of the lecturers in the Faculty of Law in AAU,
3. To identify the electronic databases available to lecturers in the Faculty of Law, AAU, Ekpoma,
4. To determine the frequency of electronic databases use by the Faculty of Law lecturers of AAU, Ekpoma, and
5. To find out the challenges faced by the Faculty of Law lecturers of AAU in using an electronic database.

Theoretical Framework

"Theoretical framework holds a prime position in scientific research" (Obinyan, 2011) due more to the fact that "conceptual and theoretical abstractions control for efficient and deeper comprehension of reality" (Mukherji, 2000). Adopted in this research is the theory of technological determinism because of "the fact that technology has important effects in our lives" (Adler, 2006). "Technology makes certain actions permissible while denying others" (Oliver, 2011). Technologies according to Hauer, (2017),

> "structure information in a manner typical of them … The proponents of technological determinism argue that the society is influenced and shaped by technological development. It has to adjust and adapt to new technologies and innovations."[1]

The adoption of technology and determinism in this study is underpinned by the fact that technology has a tremendous influence on the perception of practitioners about their ability to accomplished tasks. As Dewsbury (2012) has observed, "application of computer combined with satellite communication has revolutionized how people search for information even from outlying databases to make a difference in their career." The choice of this theory in this study is to assist our efforts to situate information literacy and ancillary skills that will assist life-long learning in a technology-mediated world.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of observance of information ethics among the Faculty of Law lecturers?
2. What is the extent of information literacy skills of lecturers in the Faculty of Law in AAU?
3. What is the range of electronic databases available to the Faculty of Law lecturers in AAU?
4. What is the frequency of use of the electronic database by the Faculty of Law lecturers of AAU?
5. What are the challenges faced by the Faculty of Law lecturers of AAU in using an electronic database?

Literature Review

With the continuous rise in the generation of volumes of information, the acquisition of appropriate search skills becomes expedient not to gain access to the requisite information resources, but to plough through the morass of available information

to sift most appropriate information for use. Pezeshki-Rad & Zamani cited by Okiki & Mabawonku (2013) aver that the actual problem of our time is not the production/ storage of information, but in getting people to access and use the available information resources. According to *Ekenna & Mabawonku* (2013) the benefits derived by organisations and institutions from investments in information technologies, and the acquisition of electronic resources are notably influenced by the level of information literacy skills possessed by users. They further averse that "it is essential that for users to be conversant with the use, and exploitation of electronic resources by being information literate to be able to achieve quicker and more effective usage." This is because the acquisition of information literacy skills will open up opportunities for lecturers' self-directed learning in the face of numerous information sources required to expand their knowledge base, ask informed questions, and sharpen their critical thinking abilities.

Law lecturers as a community of information users have difficulties in making the right choices in terms of selecting useful information sources from the available ones for either their academic needs or for settling legal tussles in the hallow chambers of the court. To this end, quick access to the right information resources to obtain accurate information can immeasurably brighten the chances of having improved academic research output or becoming a foremost luminary in the profession. This notwithstanding, there are nagging and retarding challenges traceable to the low level of information literacy

skills among law lecturers in developing countries. Laying credence to this assertion is the study of McGuinness (2016) that established the existence of a relatively low level of information literacy among Faculty members as they prefer "learning by doing". Floyd, Colvin, & Bodur (2008), however, reported that information literate faculties' members usually perform more skillfully in improving the quality of students' papers, projects, and research output.

According to Jackie &Jackson (2005), the statement by the "Law Society and Bar Council" on what constitutes a qualifying law degree identified five "knowledge" areas and eight "general transferable skills" to the accredited requirements of the QAA Benchmark Standards. The following skills include abilities to:

iii. 'select key relevant issues for research and formulate them with clarity;
iv.   use standard paper and electronic resources to produce up-to-date information;
vii. conduct efficient searches of websites to locate relevant information, and exchange documents by email and at the same time manage information exchanged by email;
viii. produce word-processed text and present the same in an appropriate form.'

Electronic data bases with their catalogue of information are an essential part of the recent technological innovations in academic libraries. Electronic databases have proven to be very useful information sources that support the primary activities

of lecturers and students as they relate to teaching, learning, and doing research. Kofi (2014) in his research affirmed that

> "there is an increase in the use of electronic databases in universities in developing nations and it was also found that the commonly used resources are Elsevier, EBSCO host resources, AGORA, Thomson, JSTOR, Scopus, Questia, Proquest, Emerald, DATAD Science Direct and Springer Link, DOAJ, OARE, HINARI, TEEAL, Ebrary, AJOL and MIT Open Course Ware electronic databases."

Swain and Panda (2013) investigated the regularity of use of online databases, and reported that 61 out of 85 respondents use the resources daily, while 12 respondents use them on weekly bases. Also from their result only 3 of the sample rarely use the databases, while 6 and 5 respondents use the databases fortnightly and once a month respectively.

Tiemo (2017) citing Zainab, Huzaimah, & Ang (2006) research, shows that 90 of their respondents use electronic journals on regular basis, while thirty-nine (39) access and use the journals weekly. Also their finding indicate that fifteen (15) users and twelve (12) users access and make use of e-journal daily and monthly respectively. In the research conducted by Khan &Ahmed (2009) in respect of the use of electronic databases, shows that "55.69 % of the researchers that participated in the study at Aligarh Muslim University and 47.84% at Banaras Hindu University use e-journals daily". Among others, a negligible proportion of the respondents in two universities studied as represented by 5.28 % for Aligarh Muslim University and 4.75% for Banaras Hindu University use e-journals occasionally. In a similar study conducted by Omotayo (2010), it was reported that 22 (8.98%) of the respondents from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife use e-journal on daily basis, 67 (37.35%) on weekly basis, while 102 (41.63%) and 34 (13.88%) of the respondents use e-journal monthly and bi-monthly respectively. The least of the reported cases were the 20 (8.16%) respondents that utilize e-resource occasionally. Regarding the frequency of use of EIR databases among faculty members and students of the University of Nigeria Nsukka, Ekwelem, Okafor, & Ukwoma (2009) discovered that while 136 (25.5%) of the respondents utilized the e-resource very often, 168(31.5%) use it often, while 170 (31.8%) and60 (11.2%) respondents use the resources 'sometimes' and 'not very often' respectively.

Despite the overwhelming advantages associated with the use of electronic databases, the majority of the users among lecturers still lag behind. Among the probable reasons for this is poor information technology infrastructure, inadequate knowledge about access, and use of EIR among others.

Methodology

Law lecturers from the Faculty of Law in Ambrose Alli University constitute the target population of the study among which

a total of thirty-six (36) respondents were drawn. Thirty-six copies of the questionnaire were distributed out of which 33 copies were successfully retrieved. This gives a response rate of 91.7%. The raw data were analysed critically to extract useful information used in the conclusions.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Demographic Information

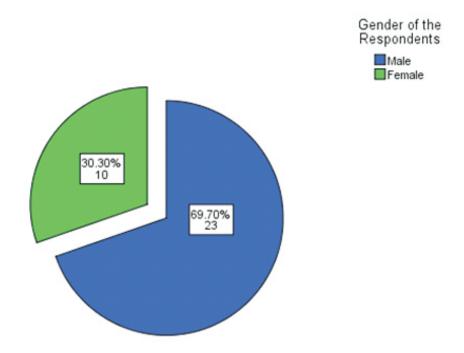Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by gender. The results show that 23 (69.7%) of the total respondents were males, while the remaining 10 (30.3%) were females. This result clearly shows the preponderance of male lecturers over the female lecturers in the Faculty of Law, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.
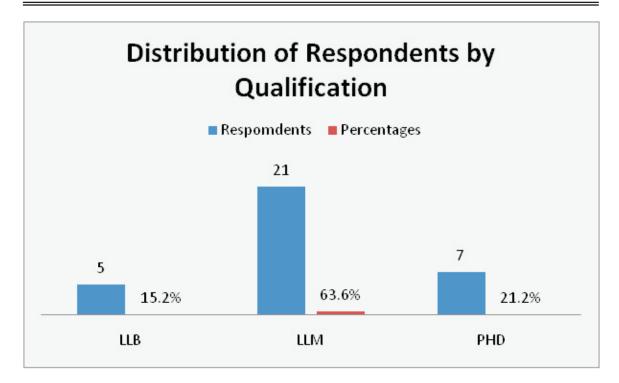
Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents by qualification. The figure revealed that no respondent has a diploma as their degree, five respondents (15.2%) have LLB, 21 (63.6%) have LLM, while 7(21.2%) respondents have a PhD. This indicates the predominance of LLM degree holders among the responding lecturers.

Findings on Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the level of observance of information ethics among the Faculty of Law lecturers?

Table 1: Level of Information Ethics Observance by Law Lecturers

S/N	Item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\bar{\mathrm{x}}$
1	I put into consideration the privacy of resource persons or respondents while using information obtained	33 (100)	-	-	-	4.0
2	I can ascertain the accuracy of available information for academic and/or research purposes	10 (30.3)	15 (45.5)	8 (24.2)	-	3.3
3	I respect the rights of authors when making use of any information.	9 (27.3)	17 (51.5)	7 (21.2)	-	3.1
4	I do not infringe copyright for the benefit of others.	25 (75.8)	8 (24.2)	-	-	3.7
5	I abide by contractual/licensing obligations regarding co pyrighted materials when making use of them.	13 (39.4)	19 (57.6)	-	-	3.3
6	I do not reproduce information materials by photocopying or any other means to honour the intellectual property rights of the author(s)	16 (48.5)	9 (27.3)	8 (24.2)	-	3.5
7	I respe ct the given access to information materials and do not try to access or hack into unauthorised databases to use the information contained therein.	21 (63.6)	12 (36.4)	-	-	3.6
8	I know how to cite the author(s) correctly in my research work	-	30 (90.9)	3(9.13)	-	2.9
9	I observe academic integrity in scholarly work by quoting, paraphrasing where necessary.	33 (100)	-	-	-	4.0

It is clear from Table 1 that the answers provided by 100% of the respondents to the various items were positively significant judging from the values of the calculated central tendencies that were higher than the criterion mean of 2.5. Regardless of this, 100% of the lecturers observed 'to a very high level' the privacy of resource persons or respondents while using information obtained in addition to maintaining academic integrity in scholarly work by quoting and paraphrasing where necessary with a mean score of =4.0in regarding the two items under consideration. However, respondents' knowledge about how to cite the author(s) correctly in their researches

though positively significant was the lowest with amean score of 2.9.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of information literacy skills of the Faculty of Law lecturers of AAU?

Table 2: Extent of Information Literacy Skills of Lecturers

To what extent is the level of information literacy skills of the Faculty of law lecturers?

S/N	Item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\overline{X}$
1	Proficient in the use of computer	21 (63.6%)	12 (36.4%)	-	-	3.3
2	Ability to navigate through the Internet to browse and locate information	-	33 (100%)	-	-	3.0
3	Ability to synthesis information gathered from multiple sources	17 (51.5%)	16 (48.5%)	-	-	3.5
4	Determination of different types and formats of potential sources of information, e.g. multimedia, database, audio/video, book	15 (45.5%)	18 (54.5%)	-	-	3.5
5	Ability to use the different types of search processes effectively	19 (56.3%)	14 (43.7%)	-	-	3.7
6	Ability to access information from scholars, organisations, the government on the Internet	3 (9.1%)	30 (90.9%)	-	-	3.1
7	Ability to organise information meaningfully	22 (66.7%)	11 (33.3%)	-	-	3.7
8	Ability to evaluate internet sources	33 (100%)	-	-	-	4.0

From Table 2 on the extent of information literacy skills of law lecturers, all the respondents indicated that their level of information literacy is to a very great extent/high extent. From this table, it is obvious that the level of information literacy skills of law lecturers is high.

Research Question 3: What is the range of electronic databases available to the Faculty of law lecturers of AAU?

Table 3: Electronic Information Resources Available to Law Lecturers

S/N	Item	Yes	No	Total (%)
1	LexisNexis Academic	33 (100%)	-	100%
2	Kluwer Arbitration	33 (100%)	-	100%
3	I-Law	33 (100%)	-	100%
4	Quick Law	33 (100%)	-	100%
5	World Legal Information	33 (100%)	-	100%
6	LexisNexis professionals	33 (100%)	-	100%
7	Acts online	21 (63.6%)	12 (36.4%)	100%
8	Lexis Analytics	33 (100%)	-	100%
9	Cabinet Online	17 (51.5%)	16 (48.5%)	100%
10	Jutastat	14 (43.7%)	19 (56.3%)	100%
11	ProQuest	11 (33.3%)	22 (66.7%)	100%
12	Biblio Online	33 (100%)	-	100%

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Daily	19	57.6%
2	Weekly	14	42.4%
3	Monthly	-	-
4	Never	-	-
Total		**33**	**100%**

Discussion of Findings

From the analysis of the demographic variables, it was revealed that the majority of the respondents were males. Also, it was found that the majority of the respondents have obtained B.L. and LLB as their degree qualification.

From the analysis of data, the level of observance of information ethics while using the electronic databases of the law lecturers revealed a very high level. All the lecturers observed the privacy of resource persons or respondents while using information obtained and academic integrity in scholarly work by quoting, paraphrasing where necessary with a mean score of 3.0. Items such as accuracy of available information for academic and/or research purposes, respect the rights of authors when making use of any information and how to cite the author(s) received the mean score less than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Also, it was discovered that the lecturers' level of information literacy is to a high extent due to the availability of electronic databases in the university. This is in line with Daramola (2016), who stated that most of the universities provide e-databases to their users (students and lecturers) to support teaching, research, and development which in turn have enhanced their information literacy skills. He also stated that the library provides the infrastructures and internet facilities to enhance lecturers' and other users' access to online resources through electronic databases.

The study also revealed that the majority of the respondents use the electronic database on a daily and weekly basis. This means that their frequency of use of the electronic database in their day-to-day academic activities is high. This agrees with the findings of Tiemo (2017) in his study that 90% of the respondents that were surveyed "were heavy users of electronic journals, as they tend to use e-databases more frequently. Similarly, Madhusudhan (2010) reported respondents using an electronic database to access electronic resources to prompt high dependency on their research outputs.

Furthermore, it was discovered that there are various electronic databases available to law lecturers. However, as revealed from the findings of this study, not all these databases are frequently used. The databases mostly used by the respondents include LexisNexis

S/N	Items				MEAN	STD	DECISION
1	Poor information technology infrastructure development	12 (36.4%)	21 (63.6%)	-	1.17	0.07	**YES**
2	Poor information technology infrastructure / low-cost and that no facilities	23 (69.7%)	10 (30.3%)	-	1.12	0.09	**YES**
3	Inaccessibility of some electronic resources	6 (18.2%)	25 (75.7%)	2 (6.1%)	1.08	0.06	**YES**
4	A large mass of irrelevant information	28 (84.8%)	5 (15.2%)	-	-	1.11	0.19	**YES**
5	Lack of knowledge on how to use each skill	7 (21.2%)	23	-	-	1.46	0.15	**YES**
6	Inadequate teaching skill	17 (51.5%)	16 (48.5%)	-	1.14	0.13	**YES**
7	Difficulties in navigating through electronic resources	9 (27.3%)	22 (66.7%)	-	-	1.16	**YES**
8	Potential lack of control over communication	2 (6.1%)	19 (57.6%)	7 (21.2%)	1.10	0.90	**YES**
9	Lack of time to search for information on the Internet	11 (33.3%)	22 (66.7%)	-	-	1.16	0.13	**YES**
10	Lack of constant electricity supply	12 (36.4%)	20 (60.6%)	-	-	1.12	**YES**

Academic, Kluwer Arbitration, I-Law, Quick Law, World Legal Information, LexisNexis professionals, Lexis Analytics, & Biblio Online. This agrees with the findings of Aforo & Lamptey (2012), and Anyaogu & Mabawonku (2014). Similarly, Kofi (2014) observed that electronic database are now available in Nigerian universities and there is an increase in the use of electronic databases by lecturers in universities in developing nations; it was also found that the commonly used resources are Elsevier, I-Law, EBSCO host resources, AGORA, Thomson, JSTOR,

World Legal Information, Scopus, Questia, Proquest, Emerald, DATAD Science Direct and Springer Link, DOAJ, OARE, HINARI, TEEAL, Ebrary, AJOL and MIT Open Course Ware electronic databases.

Finally, findings from the study showed that there are challenges faced by law lecturers in accessing and using the electronic databases. These include poor information technology infrastructure; inaccessibility of some electronic resources, the large mass of irrelevant information, inadequate search skills; potential lack of control over communication; and lack of time in searching for information on the Internet among others This is in line with Bhardwaj & Madhusudan (2014) who identified improper arrangement of legal information resources, poor description of legal information sources, too many login requirements among others.

Conclusion

The availability of electronic databases has notably increased in academic environments, and it has been used for significantly academic purposes. These electronic databases provide access to varieties of information sources that can be accessed by lecturers and students. Without a doubt, the use of these electronic databases has contributed effectively to higher achievements in various academic activities.

This study interrogated information literacy skills and Law lecturers of Ambrose Alli University's use of electronic databases. The results of the study revealed that electronic databases are available to lecturers which they use to a high extent. However, there are specific electronic databases frequently used by law lecturers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations were made:

1. Law lecturers should be abreast of the available electronic databases that are best for them in sourcing for information.
2. Internet connectivity is pivotal in the promotion of the utilisation of electronic databases. As such, the university management endeavour to improve on the connectivity of the Internet in the university.
3. Law lecturers should endeavour to acquire skills ancillary to information literacy to ensure easy access, navigation and use of the electronic databases.
4. The library should engage lecturers to deepen their knowledge in the area of information literacy and the associated skills for improved effectiveness.

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