Comparative Analysis of Information Literacy Competence among Students of Information Resources Management, Babcock University, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study was carried out to ascertain the information literacy competence of Information Resources Management students at Babcock University. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population consisted of 261 graduate and undergraduate students. Sampling was enumerative as all members of the population were chosen to participate in the study. Data was collected using a self-constructed questionnaire. Frequency and percentage counts were used for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed a high level of information literacy competence. Graduate students were, however, found to have a higher degree of information literacy competence compared to undergraduate students. The greatest challenge to attaining information literacy competence was identified as the inability of the university library to support learning through formal and informal user education programmes. Based on the findings, the study concluded that information literacy competence is indeed necessary for academic success as it serves as the road map for navigating the world of information. The study, therefore, recommends that information literacy is built into the curriculum irrespective of the programme of study. University libraries, on the other hand, should provide information materials for individual reading and employ a variety of methods to teach information literacy at all levels of study.

Keywords: Information literacy competence; Information Resources Management; Babcock University.

Introduction

The 21st century more than any other period in the history of humanity has witnessed the appearance of information in diverse formats. Students at different levels of education are now exposed to information in online databases, emails, films, posters, social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram amongst others in addition to print resources. The variety of information presentation, however, presents some level of difficulties for students who grapple with understanding sources of information, techniques for locating, accessing and evaluating information as well as issues of ethics associated with information use. For students of Information Resources Management (IRM), who are being trained to possess knowledge of selection, acquisition, organisation, storage, retrieval and use of recorded knowledge and information sources of all kinds in a variety of environments like libraries, archives, museums, records centers, information centers, and to use Information Technology as an integral part of the operation and services of information agencies (Babcock University Undergraduate Bulletin, 2009-2011), the situation is even more critical.

Attainment of information literacy skills is necessary for coping with personal and academic activities as it would enable students to identify, locate, evaluate and make ethical use of information resources. For, the student of IRM, however, it is also a skill needed for career success as they must attain a high level of information literacy competency so as to cope with the demands of the information profession.

Statement of the Problem

Information literacy is a necessary skill for navigating and making ethical use of the various formats through which information is presented in today's world. However, research shows that many students do not acquire information literacy skills before earning their degrees (Maughan, 2001). For the student of Information Resources Management, who is not just struggling with academics, but must also attain basic work skills needed to function effectively as information professional, competence in information literacy becomes crucial. It is in the light of this that the present study investigates the information literacy competence of I.R.M students at Babcock University.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1 To compare the information literacy competence of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Babcock University;
2 Determine the challenges associated with acquiring information literacy competence.

Literature Review

The 21^{s} century more than any other period in history has witnessed the explosion of information in diverse formats. Today, information can be created easily, accessed and disseminated through various print and digital formats. Unlike the days when libraries were the only option for carrying out research, students can now find and use information in other sources such as online databases, CDs, and social media. The abundance of information in today's society calls for an understanding of the formats available which invariably extends the concept of literacy beyond the ability to read and write to the abilities needed for recognizing an information need, identifying and making ethical use of information sources. Bruce (2003) defines information literacy as the ability to access, evaluate, organize and use information to learn, solve problems, and make decisions in formal and informal learning context, at work, at home, and in educational settings.

Competency according to Alberta Education (2010) as cited by Anunobi and Udem (2015) has to do with knowledge, skills and attitude which are drawn upon and applied to a particular context for successful learning and living. It could be seen as the power to take decisions relating to the use of information resources. Information literacy, therefore, can be said to be the set of skills which equips information seekers to make appropriate decisions in the search for and use of information resources. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) a division of the American Library Association and a leading authority in information literacy, defined and set the standards for information literacy competence in higher education from which performance indicators and outcomes are established. In its' document on standards for information literacy in higher education, ACRL (2000) stated that an information literate individual can:

1. Determine the extent of information needed
2. Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
3. Evaluate information and its sources critically
4. Incorporate selected information into one's knowledgebase
5. Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
6. Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally

The importance of information literacy competence cannot be overestimated as it forms not just the basis for academic success but also for lifelong learning. Students who are not information literate would, no doubt, encounter challenges with writing academic papers as they may not be able to identify reliable sources of information and even when they manage to come across reliable information, would not be able to make ethical use of them thereby engaging in acts of plagiarism. The achievement of information literacy is holistic as students must understand all aspects of literacy as outlined by ACRL (2000) to be considered information literate.

Information literacy is an important concept for students of library science and related disciplines such as IRM as they are expected to function as information professionals capable of guiding others in their search and use of information upon graduation. The importance attached to information literacy has led to its inclusion in library and information science curriculum (Inskip, 2015). However, in a survey of information literacy education in library schools in Africa, Baro (2011) affirmed that only few library schools offer information literacy as a stand-alone, credit earning course. In some schools, it is taught as a non-credit earning course or a credit-earning course embedded mother general study courses (Rasaki, 2008). For the Department of Information Resources Management, Babcock University, information literacy is, however, taught as a stand-alone credit earning course in the second year of study.

Several researchers have investigated information literacy competency of students. A study by Mutula, Wamukoya and Zulu (2005) which assessed the status and level of integration of information literacy within the academic programs of Library and Information Studies (LIS) at the University of Botswana revealed that though most of the library and information science courses had large components of information literacy content most of the students were not equipped with requisite information literacy skills to effectively meet the demands of the job market. Indira (2009) in a study of information literacy competency of library and information science students at the Faculty of Humanities University of Indonesia categorized students as competent .In a more recent study, Anunobi and Udem (2015) investigated the information literacy competence of LIS postgraduate students in Federal Universities in South East Zone Nigeria. The study revealed that respondents possessed high level of information literacy knowledge with measures on understanding the need for information, locating, evaluating and using information having average percentage scores of 95%, 87%, 82% and 88% respectively.

In related studies, Mahmood (2013) investigated students perceived information literacy skills at the University of

Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. The results of the study revealed that participants perceived that they were good in information literacy skills as they assessed themselves as 'frequently' comfortable with 13 information-related activities (with a Mean score 2.50 and above). Adetimirin (2012), investigated Information and Communication Technology literacy skills of undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities, the study revealed that undergraduates in the State universities (BSU and IMSU) have poor ICT literacy skills while those with average ICT literacy skills were in the Federal universities (ABU and UNIMAID). Three major factors affecting the ICT literacy of the undergraduates were identified as irregular power supply, inadequate ICT facilities and limited duration of the use of the ICT. Other barriers to information literacy skills competence are a full curriculum that leaves little time for information literacy instruction opportunities (Bury, 2010), scarce resources (time, human resources, equipment) and negative attitude of students toward information literacy (Julien, 2005).

Methods

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population was made up of 261 graduate and undergraduate students listed in the 1st semester 2015/16 academic class list in the Department of Information Resources Management, Babcock University. Graduate students used for the study were those on the regular module of study. Students on the elongated study module were not utilised for this study as their classes take place mostly on Sundays. In all, the Ph.D./MIRM students on regular module were 37 while undergraduates were 224 in number. Due to the manageable size of the population, all members of the population were chosen as participants for the study. Data was collected using a self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section A captured demographic information such as level of study. Section B measured information literacy competence using statements derived from ACRL standards for higher education (2000). Each standard was measured using multiple choice questions scored dichotomously. For instance, in measuring the ability to determine the nature and extent of needed information, the question "Where are you most likely to locate peer-reviewed articles?" was asked. Respondents were given options to choose from. Correct answers were given the score of 1 while wrong answers were assigned the score of 0. Section C of the questionnaire identified challenges to information literacy competence using a four-point Likert type scale. Section D utilised the open-ended response format to seek suggestions for improving information literacy competence. Out of 261 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 238 (91.2%) were retrieved and found usable for data analysis. Frequency and percentage counts were used for data analysis.

Results

Table 1: Respondents' Distribution by Level of Study

Level of study	Frequency	Percent
10 0	27	11.4
200	26	10.9
300	42	17.6
400	72	30.3
800	36	15.1
900	35	14.7
Total	238	100.0

Table 1 reveals respondents distribution by level of study. Majority of the respondents were undergraduate students

Table 2: Information Literacy Competencies

S/N	Questions	Answers	Postgraduate	Undergraduate
1	Where are you most likely to locate peer-reviewed articles?	Journals	95(51.4%)	7(13.2%)
	How would you determine that you have enough information for a		173(93.5%)	38(71.7%)
2	research work?	By using multiple sources of information		
3	Which of the following is a correct use of truncation?	musi* and lyrics	57(30.8%)	22(41.5%)
4	To connect synonyms in an online search, it is advisable to use	or	135(73%)	28(52.8%)
5	- ----------		162(87.6%)	42(79.2%)
6	Assuming you are working on a topic titled "code of ethics for librarians in Nigeria" using an article from Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria's website. Which website evaluation criteria are you most likely to pay attention to?	second-handvehicles, road accidents, Nigeria objectivity of the write-up	113(61.8%)	28(52.8%)
7	Power point presentations are most effective when:	Ideas are expressed as bullet points	144(77.8%)	37(69.8%)
8	The flow chart is best used to:		127(68.6%)	38(71.7%)
		Explain a process or indicate how something moves from one stage to the other		
9	Which of the following concepts makes it illegal to reproduce portions of other peoples' work for profit purposes?	Copyright	132(71.4%)	40(75.5%)
	Plagiarism is said to take place when:		126(68.1%)	36(67.9%)
10		You make use of an author's idea without giving him/her credit		

Table 2 reveals a high level of information literacy by graduate students who obviously scored higher on the test compared to undergraduate students. In the area of truncation use (question 3) and flow chart (question 8) which dealt with accessing and presenting information respectively, undergraduates, however, obtained higher scores.

Table 3: Challenges to Information Literacy Competence

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The University library does not support students learning of information literacy through formal or informal user education programmes	14(5.9%)	106(44.5%)	77(32.4%)	41(17.2%)
2	Teachers do not make efforts to teach information literacy skills	16(6.7%)	90(37.8%)	107(45%)	25(10.5%)
3	It is hard to acquire information literacy skills on my own	24(10.1%)	76(31.9%)	117(49.2%)	21(8.8%)
4	There are few books on information literacy in the library	23(9.7%)	69(290	106(44.5%)	40(16.8%)
5	I have not attended any class on information literacy	32(13.4%)	43(18.1%)	79(33.2%)	84(35.3%)

The greatest challenge to attaining information literacy

competence as seen in Table 3 is the university library's inability to support the learning of information literacy through formal or informal use education programmes as affirmed by 50.4% of the respondents who indicated agreement to the statement. This was followed closely by lack of efforts by teachers to teach information literacy skills (44.5%). A little below average, 42% did affirm that it is hard to acquire information literacy skills on one's own.

Table 4: Ways of improving information literacy competence

Statements	Frequency	Percent
Include the teaching of information literacy skills in the curriculum	53	22.3
Organization of information literacy programmes by libraries	28	11.8
Provision of material for information literacy	25	10.5
Creation of awareness on information literacy	20	8.4
Encouraging the use of Information Technology in learning	16	6.7
Students should read articles relating to the topic	8	3.4

To improve information literacy competence among students, most of the respondents expressed the view that the teaching of information literacy skills should be a part of the curriculum. They also expressed the view that libraries organize information literacy programmes, provide information materials and create awareness while teachers encourage the use of Information Technology in learning. It was also suggested that students should read articles relating to information literacy.

Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, it is obvious that the level of information literacy competency of students of Information Resources Management, Babcock University is above average. Graduate students were, however, found to have a higher level of literacy compared with undergraduates. The test result for undergraduate students was indeed encouraging as they scored above 50% in all test items except in the use of truncation and identifying the most likely place to locate peer-reviewed article. The finding is in agreement with studies of Indira (2009); Mahmood (2013) Anunobi and Udem (2015) which revealed high level of information literacy competency among Library and Information Science students but disagreed with the findings of Mutula, Wamukoya and Zulu (2005) which found LIS students lacking in information literacy skills.

The greatest challenge to attaining information literacy competence was affirmed to be the library's inability to support students' learning of information literacy through formal or informal user education programmes. This finding gives credence to the findings of Bury (2010) which revealed that a major barrier to information literacy skills acquisition is a full curriculum that leaves little or no time for information literacy instruction opportunities. This is understandable considering that the use of library course which exposes students to information literacy in most universities in Nigeria is classified as a general course (GEDS) and taught only at the first year of study. Subsequently, students are faced with other courses in the curriculum that leaves them little or no time to pursue further instructions in information literacy.

Although the greatest challenges to attaining information literacy was found to be library's inability to support learning through formal and informal user education programmes, most of the respondents who suggested ways of improving information literacy competence did suggest the inclusion of information literacy in the curriculum as well as efforts to be made by libraries in floating information literacy programmes, creating awareness and making information materials on the subject readily available.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Information literacy is necessary for academic success and lifelong learning. It is the road map with which students are to navigate the world of information which now appears in diverse formats to support classroom learning. Based on the findings the following recommendations are made.

1. Information literacy should be built into the curriculum irrespective of the programme of study in addition to the general use of library course to ensure more support for the learning of information literacy.
2. University libraries can also use a variety of methods to meet the information literacy needs of students at all levels of study instead of focusing only on those in their first year of study.
3. Information materials should be acquired and made available to aid individual learning.

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