

PERCEPTION OF INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS BY LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The research assessed the perceptions of information literacy skills of librarians in university libraries in Benue state Nigeria. It also sought to determine challenges to effective information literacy skills acquisition and services in these universities. Questionnaire was used to collect data. Questionnaires were distributed to librarians in 5 universities in Benue state Nigeria. A total of 67 usable copies of the questionnaire were returned. Results showed that generally respondents have a positive view of librarians' roles and capabilities in information literacy services. Respondents scored their skills highest on locating skills in the use of library catalogues, encyclopedias, indexes, and abstracts to find information. However, respondents rated their skills lowest on ability to carry out search using Boolean operators and ability to use appropriate presentation software to present information. Non provision of facilities needed to apply information literacy skills and regulatory bodies on library and information science do not regulate curriculum on information literacy are some of the major challenges that inhibits Information literacy skills acquisition and programme development in the institutions. The study concludes that there is a need for IL standards that will guide information literacy development in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria.

Keywords: *Information, Literacy Skills, perception, university libraries*

Introduction

In today's dynamic information environment, Information Literacy (IL) has become an essential competency for academic and professional success. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, 2016) defines IL as the set of integrated abilities encompassing the

reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning. This expanded perspective acknowledges IL as more than a set of skills, it is a critical component of lifelong learning and digital citizenship.

Recent scholarship emphasizes that IL fosters critical thinking, informed decision-making, and effective problem-solving. Bruce (2016) highlights IL as a transformative element in higher education, enabling individuals to engage meaningfully with information and construct new understandings. Lloyd (2019) adds that IL is a socially situated practice shaped by interactions with digital, physical, and social contexts—making it essential for navigating today’s complex information ecosystems.

For librarians, IL is not merely conceptual, it is a practical and evolving professional responsibility. As noted by Julien, Gross, and Latham (2021), academic librarians are increasingly involved in teaching IL across disciplines, designing curricula that integrate IL outcomes with institutional goals. They serve as instructional partners, helping students develop competencies to access, evaluate, and ethically use information in diverse formats. Ojedokun and Idiodi (2020) stress that Nigerian academic librarians must adopt innovative approaches to IL instruction to remain relevant in the digital age.

University libraries in Nigeria, as the intellectual backbone of academic institutions, are strategically positioned to lead IL education. These libraries support the core mandates of teaching, research, and community engagement. However, systemic barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient policy support, and the absence of national IL standards have

undermined the capacity of librarians to fully deliver on this mandate (Thanuskodi and Subramaniyan, 2020; Olanrewaju and Ajayi, 2021). Professional development remains limited, and many librarians lack access to regular training that would enhance their instructional roles.

This study investigates the perception and competence of IL skills among librarians in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. It assesses their readiness to deliver IL instruction, explores institutional limitations, and recommends strategies to strengthen IL service delivery. By addressing these concerns, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on improving IL integration within Nigerian higher education and aligning local practices with global educational standards.

Research Questions.

1. What are the perceptions of librarians to information literacy?
2. What is the level of information literacy skills possessed by librarians in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria
3. What are the challenges to acquisition of information literacy by librarians in university libraries in Benue State Nigeria?

Review of Literature

Information literacy (IL) has become a foundational element in modern education, enabling individuals to critically engage with information in academic, professional, and everyday settings. As defined by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, 2017), IL encompasses the reflective discovery of information, understanding how information is produced and valued, and the ethical use of information in learning and knowledge creation. This

reconceptualization highlights IL not just as a skill set, but as a holistic, integrative process rooted in intellectual engagement and social responsibility.

Recent literature emphasizes that IL must be understood as a dynamic and context-sensitive practice. Lloyd (2017) argues that IL is constructed through participation in social, digital, and professional environments, and that effective IL instruction should be adapted to reflect users' real-life contexts. This understanding is critical for library and information science (LIS) professionals, particularly those working in educational institutions where students face a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

The proliferation of electronic information resources has also reshaped how IL is practiced and taught. Thanuskodi and Subramaniyan (2020) observed that the increased availability of digital tools and databases has not always translated into improved IL competence, especially in developing countries. Challenges such as limited ICT infrastructure, inadequate training opportunities, and poor integration of IL into curricula persist. These issues are particularly relevant in Nigeria, where many university libraries are still adapting to the shift toward digital literacy and e-learning.

Academic librarians have had to adopt new roles to meet these challenges. Julien, Gross, and Latham (2021) note that librarians are no longer confined to collection management but are increasingly viewed as educators responsible for teaching IL within academic curricula. This shift requires a proactive engagement in instructional design, assessment, and collaboration with faculty to develop students' research and evaluation skills.

In the Nigerian context, university libraries serve as essential hubs for IL instruction, supporting students and faculty in research and lifelong learning. According to Olanrewaju and Ajayi (2021), these libraries are uniquely positioned to facilitate IL programs but face institutional barriers such as lack of national standards, policy frameworks, and consistent funding. Despite these challenges, librarians are expected to promote IL through formal and informal instruction, user education programs, and digital resource training. This study builds on these insights by examining the perception and competence of librarians in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. It investigates the degree to which librarians are prepared to lead IL efforts and identifies the infrastructural and professional development gaps that may hinder their effectiveness.

Methodology

Survey design was adopted for the research. Data was collected using a self- designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information from the librarians on their perceptions of information literacy, the level of skills possessed by them and the challenges to information literacy acquisition. The questionnaire ($\alpha = .891$) is made up of three sections and 30 items. Section one was made up of general statements on perceptions of information literacy, section two was on statements on level of skills and section three consisted of statements on challenges to information literacy skills acquisition and development in university libraries in Benue State. Responses were structured on a four point scale. Questionnaires were distributed to librarians in the five university libraries in Benue Nigeria. Total enumeration of the entire population of 76 professional librarians from the five university libraries under study was used as

the population is not so large from the response from the universities under study on the number of librarians. The choice of the 76 is because in the census survey all members of the population are considered as samples.

Result

Results were analyzed using simple percent and mean score. Since the scale is based on a four point scale, the midpoint of the scale is 2.50. Therefore items with a mean score of up to and above 2.50 were regarded as high and items with a mean score of below 2.50 were regarded as low. All analysis was done using SPSS version 17.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents in the university libraries

Names of Universities	No of respondents	Percentage%
Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University Makurdi	30	
Benue State university Makurdi	23	
University of Mkar, Mkar	7	
Federal university of health technology Otuokpo	13	
National open university, Makurdi center	3	
Total	76	100

Librarians Perceptions of Information Literacy The librarians were required to indicate their perception of information literacy.

The result of their response is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Perceptions on Librarians' Involvement in Information Literacy Skills

S/N	perception	A	%	D	%	Mean	STD
1	Librarians have good understanding of information literacy	72	82.8	15	17.2	3.20	1.01
2	Librarians are very much interested in the acquisition of information literacy skills	74	85.1	13	14.9	3.29	1.01
3	Librarians possess the basic computer literacy needed for information literacy education	72	82.8	15	17.4	3.05	.730

4	Librarians are capable of embracing new concepts and challenges brought by information literacy	75	86.2	12	13.8	3.45	76
5	Education of librarians emphasis information literacy skills acquisition	41	47.7	45	52.3	2.44	.915
6	Librarians possess information literacy skills which they can input on students	64	73.6	23	26.4	3.02	.881

Table 2 shows librarians perceptions of information literacy. Analysis of the responses reveals that only item 5 (Education of LIS professionals in Nigeria emphasizes information literacy skills acquisition) scored below the acceptable mean of 2.50. All other items obtained a mean score above 2.50. This indicates that the respondents have a positive view of information literacy except for the emphasis placed on IL skills in the education of LIS professionals.

Level of Information Literacy Skills of Librarians

Table 3: Level of Information Literacy Skills of Librarians

S/N	TASK	MEAN	SD
	<i>Need skills</i>		
1	Ability to identify the general purpose of information for a task given	3.42	.542
2	Ability to formulate questions which will guide the task given	3.40	.515
3	Ability to use several sources to increase familiarity with the subject of the task	3.36	.482

	<i>Locate skills</i>		
4	Ability to use library catalogues effectively	3.71	.571
5	Ability to use abstracting and indexing databases to find information	3.50	.664
6	Ability to use encyclopedia and other reference resources to gather background information	3.71	.589
7	Ability to use search engines like Google and databases to locate information resources	3.20	.819
8	Ability to formulate right keywords such as author, title and subject in searching for information	3.08	.852
9	Ability to carry out search using Boolean operators or, and, not	2.74	.883
	<i>Evaluate skills</i>		
10	Ability to evaluate information resources irrespective of the sources	3.28	.659
11	Ability to evaluate print resources using the acceptable criteria	3.20	.713
12	Ability to evaluate information resources based on authority, accuracy, authority, and relevance.	3.28	.587
13	Ability to analyze the collected information	3.39	.688
	<i>Use skills</i>		

14	Ability to develop new knowledge and understanding from collected information	3.28	.585
15	Ability to use appropriate presentation software to present information	2.78	.813
16	Ability to use the collected information in a legally accepted manner	3.18	.771
17	Ability to use acceptable writing and citation styles to present result	3.16	.667

Based on the four elements of information literacy as defined by American Library Association (1999), respondents were asked to rate their level of IL skills on a four point scale of high skills (4) to no skills (1). Table 3 shows mean scores of respondents on the listed items. The result shows that the librarians possess high skills in all items of the needed skills (3.36 - 3.42) and all items of the evaluation skills (3.20 -3.29). Librarians also rated their skills high in locating resources except the ability to carry out search using Boolean operators where they possessed moderate skills (2.74). The librarians also possess high Use skills (3.16 – 3.28) except on Item

S/ N	CHALLENGES	SA	A	SD	D	MEAN	SD
1	Employers of librarians do not provide the capacity development or training opportunity likely to enhance their information literacy skill	49	56.3	38	43.7	2.71	.866

2	Librarians do not engage themselves in capacity building to enhance their information literacy skills	16	18.4	71	81.6	1.84	.800
3	Employees engage librarians in increasing workload which do not give them time for information literacy skills enhancement.	38	43.7	49	56.3	2.71	.819
4	Facilities such as computers and Internet needed to apply information literacy skills by librarians are not provided by the employers	61	70.1	26	29.9	2.91	.941
5	Many employers have not expanded the use of library training to accommodate information literacy where librarians can impart and practice the learned information literacy skills.	56	64.4	31	35.6	2.77	.821
6	Provision is not made for mentoring on information literacy skills in establishments which employed librarians.	49	56.3	38	43.7	2.60	.816
7	The Nigerian Library Association does not provide continuing education training for librarians on information literacy skills.	45	51.7	42	48.3	2.43	.819
8	Regulatory bodies on LIS do not regulate curriculum on information literacy to ensure that it follows globally acceptable standards.	48	55.2	39	44.8	2.58	.847

15 (ability to use presentation software to present information) where they rated their skills moderate (2.78).

Challenges to Information Literacy Skills Acquisition and Implementations of Information Literacy Programmes.

The respondents were required to indicate the challenges to librarians' acquisition of information literacy. The result is presented in Table 3

Table 3: Challenges to Information literacy

Table 3 shows challenges militating against information literacy development and implementation in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The result shows that six of the items listed were considered challenges to information literacy acquisition in the College of Education. They include lack of capacity development or training opportunity (item 1); increasing workload (item 3) poor facilities (item 4) No provision for mentoring (item 6) and lack of regulation of curriculum on information literacy to ensure that it follows globally acceptable standards Item nine. Two items with mean scores below 2.50 were not considered challenges by the respondents. Librarians do not engage themselves in capacity building and Nigerian Library Association does not provide continuing education training for librarians on information literacy skills.

Conclusion

Librarians in the study have shown good perceptions towards IL and rated their skills high. This is commendable because it shows that with good support these librarians can join in the global efforts to build an information literate society. However, numerous problems were identified as

militating against effective information skills acquisition and implementation of IL in the institutions. These include: non provision of facilities such as computers and Internet needed to apply information literacy skills, poor training opportunities and regulatory bodies on library and information science do not regulate curriculum on information literacy to ensure that it follows globally acceptable standards. These factors incidentally are important to be addressed if information literacy will be properly entrenched into the education system of these universities. To solve these problems, there is a need for standards to be established to guide the development and proper implementation of information literacy programmes in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study regarding the perceptions, skill levels, and challenges related to information literacy (IL) among librarians in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

1. Development of National IL Standards

Regulatory bodies such as the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) and the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) should collaborate to develop and implement nationally recognized standards for information literacy. These standards will serve as benchmarks for IL education and practice within university libraries across the country.

2. Integration of IL into Library and Information Science (LIS) Curricula

Institutions offering LIS programs should revise their curricula to include core courses in

information literacy instruction, digital literacy, and user education. This will ensure that future librarians are adequately equipped with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills in IL.

3. Continuous Professional Development for Librarians

Employers should organize regular training, workshops, and seminars to build the capacity of librarians in IL, particularly in areas such as Boolean search, digital presentation tools, and database navigation. These initiatives can be held in collaboration with professional bodies or academic institutions.

4. Provision of Technological Infrastructure

University management should prioritize the provision of essential infrastructure—such as computers, high-speed internet, and presentation tools—within libraries. These are critical for both the delivery and practice of IL instruction.

5. Mentorship and Peer Learning Programs

Libraries should establish internal mentorship programs where experienced librarians guide and train less experienced colleagues on IL skills and instructional techniques. This will promote knowledge transfer and a culture of continuous learning.

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