

# Information Literacy Skills and Perceptions of Librarians in Colleges of Education in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Information literacy training has become an important role for librarians in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. However to function effectively as information literacy instructors, librarians need to have good perceptions towards the service and also possess the requisite skills to pass on. The research assessed the perceptions and information literacy skills of librarians in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. It also sought to determine challenges to effective information literacy skills acquisition and services in these institutions. Questionnaire was used to collect data. Questionnaires were distributed to librarians in 39 Colleges of Education in the six geo-political zones of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. A total of 87 useable copies of the questionnaire were returned. Results showed that generally respondent 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 challenge that inhibits Information literacy skills acquisition and programme development in the institutions. The study concludes that there is need for IL standards that will guide information literacy development in Nigerian Colleges of Education.

**Keywords:** Information Literacy, Professional skills, Librarians' perceptions, Academic Librarians, College of Education

## 1. Introduction

There is a shift in library services where technology has reduced institutional access to information to remote access not limited by time and space. Technology has also led to increase in the amount of information available for intellectual consumption, research and learning. New modes of accessing information, the quantity of materials available for search and the problem of identifying quality information from the maze, necessitates that users have requisite skills to access needed information. Information literacy is considered a skill that is needed for accessing information in the new environment.

Information literacy (IL) is defined by as The American Library Association (1989) "a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." According to Doyle (1994), an information literate person in the 21st century needs to possess the following skills: an ability to recognize the need for information, locate required information, formulate questions based on information needs, identify potential sources of information, develop successful search strategies, and access sources of information including computer-based and other technologies. The individual must in addition be able to evaluate information no matter the source, organize information for practical application, integrate new information into an existing body of knowledge, use information in critical thinking and problem solving, and also use information ethically and legally.

In the education sector, the benefits of information literacy transcend the ability to find relevant information. It is the tool for self-directed learning and lifelong education in the age where technology have shifted the pedagogic process from a process of transfer of knowledge from teacher to student to a platform of independent learning and lifelong education. Bruce (2004) posited that information literacy is conceivably the foundation for learning in our contemporary environment of continuous technological change. As information and communication technologies develop rapidly, and the information environment becomes increasingly complex, educators are recognizing the needs for learners to engage with the information environment as part of their formal learning processes.

## **Library Professionals and Information Literacy Education**

Since librarians are purveyors of information, they have the duty to create access to both domicile information and externally relevant information. One way is by teaching information literacy skills that will enable users locate and effectively use needed information. Globally, in the library profession there has been a sustained great interest in Information literacy services. The importance attached to information literacy by library and information professionals can be gauged by the large quantity of discuss on the theme. Many libraries are making information literacy training a core duty and an important role for librarians. Eisenberg (2008) noted that IL services and instruction are essential components of every 21st century library and information program. Whether offering direct instruction to users, providing skills-based help functions on websites, delivering one-on-one assistance, or even providing meaningful signage in a physical setting, every information and library situation requires helping users to succeed through improving their information skills or understandings. These roles involve not only a formalized training but a one-on-one imparting of skills.

## **Colleges of Education in Nigeria and Information Literacy**

Colleges of Education are institutions of higher learning established to focus on the unique role of training quality teaching manpower that serve the primary and secondary education system of Nigeria. In this role, Colleges of Education are pivotal to the educational development of the Nigerian nation because they are concerned with developing education manpower to serve the basic level. There are sixty-three Colleges of Education in Nigeria. They are owned by the Federal Government, State Governments and Private organizations. These institutions offer the National Certificate in Education (NCE). Many in addition, offer the bachelor's degree programs in education.

Libraries are set up in these academic institutions like in other institutions of higher learning to support the learning process. It is important to note that libraries of all types are expected to teach information skills to their users. They are also expected to provide leadership and expertise in the use of information and information technologies that are revolutionizing teaching and learning (Boucher and Lance, 1992). Based on these premises, librarians in Colleges of Education are also expected to be involved in inculcating information literacy skills. A properly developed information literacy education in these institutions can help raise a crop of teachers that are capable of accessing and using information effectively for their work, and personal development as well as for the educational development of Nigerian children.

However to function effectively as information literacy instructors, librarians need to possess the requisite skills to pass on and also have good perceptions towards the service. They need to be very conversant with the ability to identify, evaluate and use information through various sources and formats. Hence, the research is designed to determine skills and perceptions of information literacy by the librarians in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. It also sought to find out the challenges to effective information literacy skills acquisition in these institutions.

## **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 Nigeria colleges of education?
3. What are the challenges to acquisition of information literacy by librarians in Nigerian Colleges of Education?

## **2. Method**

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 possess by them and the challenges to information literacy acquisition. The questionnaire ( $\alpha = .891$ ) is made up 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 the Colleges of Education. Responses were structured on a four point scale.

Questionnaires were distributed to librarians in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. There are Sixty-three Colleges of Education in Nigeria; thirty nine were surveyed. The zonal distribution of the Colleges of Education and

respondents drawn from each zone is presented in Table 1. A total of 87 useable copies of the questionnaire were obtained.

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 the Colleges of Education and Respondents Affiliations

	No of institution	No of respondents	%
South East	8	29	33.3
South South	8	20	23.0
South West	6	12	13.8
North Central	5	6	6.9
North West	5	11	12.6
North East	6	9	10.3
Total	39	87	100.0
Federal	16	46	52.9
State	15	32	36.8
Private	8	9	10.3
Total	39	87	100.0

### 3. Results.

#### Respondents' Demography

A higher percentage 47 (54%), of survey respondents were male while 36 (41.4%) were female, 4(4.6%) did not state their gender. 41(47.1%) had the BLS degree; 31(35.6%) had MLS and 5(5.7%) had PhD. 10 (11.5%) did not state their qualification.

#### Respondents 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 IL skills

S/NO	Perceptions	SA/A	%	SD/D	%	Mean	STD
	Librarian have good understanding of information literacy	72	82.8	15	17.2	3.20	1.01
	Librarians are very much interested in the acquisition of information literacy skills	74	85.1	13	14.9	3.29	1.01
	Librarians possess the basic computer literacy needed for information literacy education	72	82.8	15	17.4	3.05	.730
	Librarians are capable of embracing new concepts and challenges brought by IL	75	86.2	12	13.8	3.45	.759
	Education of LIS professionals in Nigeria emphasis information literacy skills acquisition	41	47.7	45	52.3	2.44	.915
	LIS educators possess information literacy skills which they can impart on students of LIS.	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 emphasis 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 on 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/no	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 need 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 possess moderate skills (2.74). The librarians also possess high Use skills (3.16 - 3.28) except on Item 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 4

Table 4: Challenges to Information literacy programs in Colleges of Education

s/no	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.	Employee engage librarians in increasing work load which do not give them time for information literacy skills enhancement.	38	43.7	49	56.3	2.51	.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	.819
7.	Nigerian Library Association does not provide continuing education training for librarians on information literacy skill.	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

Table 4 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 work load (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. They include Librarians do not engage themselves in capacity building and Nigerian Library Association does not provide continuing education training for librarians on information literacy skill.

#### 4. Discussion

American Library Association (1989) presented an information literate person as an individual who has four basic information competencies of need identification, ability to locate, evaluate and use information. The study assesses the level of information literacy of librarians in Colleges of Education in Nigeria based on these four elements. It also assessed their perceptions of information literacy. Results showed that generally respondents have positive views of librarians' roles and capabilities in information literacy services. Majority were of the view that librarians are capable of embracing new concepts and challenges brought by IL. These positive perceptions are good for the proper implementation of information literacy programmes in these institutions. It implies that librarians have fully appreciated their roles in the information literacy continuum. With proper support and planning, they will be able to perform and play their part. This result is consistent with the findings of Arya (2014) and Karisiddappa and Rajgoli (2008) who reported that all the respondents in their studies have good understanding of the concept of IL and its importance in making user empowered in the information society.

Respondents scored their skills highest on effective use of library catalogues and use of encyclopedia and other reference resources to gather background information. They also reported high skills on use of indexes, abstracts databases 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 present result. This is a strong indication that they should improve their IT skills as IL instructions have expanded to incorporate strong IT components. Librarians must therefore master these skills to enable them handle this important aspect that is needed for effective information access in the current dispensation. Ojedokun (2014) also found that academic librarians in south West Nigeria lack skills in Boolean operators and have limited understanding of web search tools. There is need to step up librarians Internet search skills.

Respondents identified factors that militate against information skills acquisition. Non provision of facilities such as computers and Internet needed to apply information literacy skills is the major challenge indicated by a high percentage of the respondents. This should be a major problem that needs to be addressed considering that information literacy today consist of a strong IT component where users are taught digital and internet literacy.

Another inhibitor is that employer of librarians does not provide the capacity development or training opportunity likely to enhance their information literacy skills. Information literacy is evolving with the fast paced technological evolution, Training and retaining provides opportunities for librarians to update their knowledge; acquire new skills and avoid obsolescence. It is important in building staff that are versatile and amenable to change. Library management should therefore advocate for training and retraining of library professional to keep them up to date with the current trend. The training can be in - house or external in form of support to conferences and workshops where new skills are imparted.

Respondents also noted that regulatory bodies on library and information science do not regulate curriculum on information literacy to ensure that it follows globally acceptable standards. There is currently no information literacy standard for libraries in Nigeria. This is unacceptable because standards are needed to regulate information literacy practices in Nigeria. Standards serve as guides in or instituting, establishing and maintaining acceptable services or product. They establish the minimum requirements and are evaluating tools that measure and checkmate adequacy. Associations such as American Library Association, Association of College and research libraries have all established standards to guide and support information literacy development in their countries. Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) and Nigerian Library Association should emulate these organizations and develop information literacy standards for the country. Library education regulatory bodies must also ensure that the curriculum is updated to reflect developments in information literacy.

## 5. 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 addresses if information literacy will be properly entrenched into the education system of these Colleges of Education. To solve these problems, there is need for standards to be established to guide the development and proper implementation of information literacy programmes in Nigerian Colleges of Education.

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