Chapter 71
Information Literacy among Undergraduate Students in Nigeria

Stella E. Igun
Delta State University, Nigeria

Jessa Precious Odafe
Delta State University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper examined information literacy skills among undergraduate students in Nigeria. The scope of the study covered two departments in Delta State University, Abraka namely: Library and Information Science and Guidance and Counselling. The study was limited to final year students of the two departments. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and the population was 517. 103 or 20% of the population of 517 were sampled for the study. 97 questionnaires were retrieved and used for the study. Simple percentage and frequency count statistical tool was used to analyze the data. The study found out that ability to use information effectively to accomplish a task, ability to recognize the needed information, ability to access the needed information effectively and efficiently and ability to evaluate information critically are the information literacy skills possessed by some of the undergraduate students in Nigeria. The study recommended that information literacy education and electronic/digital information skills should be included in the curriculum of the undergraduate students in the universities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fundamental purpose of higher education is the preparation of students for their future. If undergraduates of today who will later become graduates tomorrow are to flourish in the modern fast-paced, high-tech world, they (undergraduate) must have information literacy skills coupled within formation seeking and technological skills. Undergraduate students must be information literate. The means of acquiring these literacies must be imbedded in students' learning and be part and parcel of their educational experience. For this to be so imbedded, it is necessary for the institution to develop and maintain a robust information literacy infrastructure. Information literate stu-

dents have a number of qualities and skills. First of all, they should recognize when they have an information need. This, as we all know, is not a quality possessed by every student. Information literate students know the appropriate places to look for information, and they know the appropriate strategies to use for information seeking. Also, information literate students have the ability to recognize the needed information when such information is found and then to determine if it is the best, most accurate or most current information available (Engeldinger, 2009).

According to Hadimani and Rajgoli (2010), information literacy can combine various elements of library literacy, computer literacy, media literacy, network literacy and other literacies. It could also be noted that in the best educational experiences, students become more information literate in the natural course of learning subject contents and research methodologies of the various disciplines they study. Information has become a major economic commodity and students need to be educated for productive information use from pre-school through post-secondary education up to the university level. In the information-rich world, where the scope of available information appears limitless, there is a growing need for undergraduate students to become critical users of information. It does not only includes knowing how to locate information resources from the library, but also internet resources as well as focusing upon developing the skills necessary in seeking information from a variety of recourses'. What information found is not important, until when that information is effectively used to complete the assigned task.

Many definitions of information literacy are available in the literature. Lenox and Walker (2000) noted that information literate person is one who has the analytical and critical skills to formulate research questions and evaluate results and the skills to search for and access a variety of information types in order to meet his or her information need. They further stated that most definitions of information literacy circle around these stages of need recognition, search formulation, source selection and interrogation, information evaluation and information synthesis and use.

Information literacy includes library search, skills and information technology literacy, but it is broader than these. Information literacy is not just about finding and presenting information, it is about higher order analysis, synthesis, critical thinking and problem solving. It involves seeking and using information for independent study and learning, lifelong learning, participative citizenship and social responsibility. Information literate people have a deep awareness, connection and fluency with the information environment. He further stated that information literate people are engaged, enabled, enriched and embodied by social, procedural and physical information that constitutes an information universe, which is known through information literacy (Lloyd, 2004).

The National Forum on Information Literacy (2008) defines information literacy as the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand. Information literacy as the ability to locate, manage, critically evaluate and use information for problem solving, research and decision making. The American Library Association presidential committee on information literacy (1989) defined information literacy as the ability to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.

Keeping in view the huge amount of information available today in various formats, there is need for undergraduate students to possess the required information literacy skills to effectively utilize these information resources. Information literacy skill is essential to enable undergraduate students to know how to determine their information needs, the different information sources, their coverage and features; how to find out relevant and precise information from various informa-

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