Chapter 12
Information Literacy

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ABSTRACT

This chapter distinguished the concept of information and literacy before it proceeded to discuss extensively the concept of information literacy, which is the ability to access, evaluate, organize, and use information from several information resources. The historical development of IL was as well traced. Some notable components of IL such as identifying, finding, evaluating, application, and acknowledgement were explained. The chapter went further and elucidated the qualities of an information literate person. Lastly, benefits and challenges of IL were discussed, and a conclusion followed appropriately.

INTRODUCTION: CONCEPT OF INFORMATION AND LITERACY

Information is a resource that has varied definitions according to the format, and media used to package or transfer it, as well as the discipline that defines it (Lau, 2006). Hornby (2010) defines information as fact or details about somebody or something.

Information as it is notably addressed by people as a set of processed data. It is the end product of processed and analyzed data, which contains meaning when communicated. According to Reitz (2004), information is data presented in a readily comprehensible form to which meaning has been attributed within a context for its use.

From the point of Kolawole and Igwe (2010), information is new ideas or knowledge extracted from environment for human use with the aim of modifying behavior, effecting changes, and enhancing efficiency in all human endeavors. It is invaluable in planning, decision making and execution of programs. It has become an indispensable instrument for human survival as globalization beckons.

Uhegbu (2007) affirmed that hardly can you mention the word 'information' without somebody, especially the educated, understanding it from their various backgrounds. The definitions above justified that information may be fact or details that are packaged or transfer with the aim of enlightening, educating or improving someone's views, impressions or attitudes about something.

Though, the nomenclature or context at which information is mentioned may differ, but the term will manifest when people of the same interests or ideas are in need of something that will assist them in clarifying confusion or uncertainty, which is expected to provide details at the right time.

Literacy simply means the ability to read and write (Hornby, 2010). It is the ability to read, write and understand with minimum proficiency. Literacy is the act of being able to read, write, comprehend at the lowest level. It is the ability to possess minimum level of orientation about something. It implies a set of skills to identify, examine and decide in a particular situation or context, what are to be done to achieve desired results.

Frankel, Rowe, Becker and Pearson (2016) defined literacy as the process of using reading, writing, and oral language to extract, construct, integrate, and critique meaning through interaction and involvement with multimodal texts in the context of socially situated practices.

By integrating these concepts (information and literacy), it is easier for one to note that it will become another phrase or term, which has to carry a uniform meaning, regardless of the nature of purpose, nomenclature or context. This therefore, make information literacy a term that is all embracing, regardless of where it is mentioned.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter is prepared with the following objectives:

- To contribute to the stream of literature existing on information literacy.
- To show how information literacy is an encompassing concept that goes beyond library and education.
- To enlighten readers on the various skills, techniques and abilities required to become an information literate person.
- To reveal the opportunities attached to the learning and cultivation of information literacy skills and how those skills can be applied to all aspects of human endeavors, as well as sustain it as life-long learner.
- To compile events, issues, policies, decisions and actions that are significant to the global acceptance and usage of information literacy so far.
- To identify issues, procedures and problems affecting the growth and expansion of information literacy beyond its current shores.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION LITERACY

Information literacy firstly appeared in 1974 in a report prepared on behalf of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science by Paul G. Zurkowski, who was at the time President of the Software and Information Industry Association (Zurkowski, 1974). Zurkowski used the phrase to

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