

Review

Information Literacy Skills and Culture of Undergraduate Students Seeking Behaviour

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The paper is on information literacy and competency, which discusses barriers to information literacy programmes, how they have evolved from library user education, and the aims of various information literacy programs. Highlight that information literacy is a signal skill for lifelong learning, indicate the role of librarians in information literacy, and identify some barriers to librarians' effective involvement in and delivery of these. Information literacy is action printed while helping solve real-life problems and make the correct decisions. In addition, this paper discussed SCONUL's Seven Pillars of Information Literacy model.

Keywords: Information, Literacy, Skills, Seeking Behaviour and Undergraduate Students, Culture

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INTRODUCTION

This 21st century is characterized by information explosion and as a result, individuals are faced with diverse, abundant information choices in their academic environment, workplace, and personal lives. As more information is available in diverse forms, information stakeholders need the knowledge and skills to enable them know how to find, access, evaluate and effectively use information. Wilson (2001) opined that increasing attention to the need to find, access and effectively use information in recent years is partly the result of information overload, especially as it relates to the growth of digital information, which has even caused a new ailment termed "information fatigue syndrome". The idea of developing skills and knowledge to find, access and effectively use information, which evolved in the early 1970s has grown, taken shape and strengthened to become recognized as the critical literacy for the 21st century (Bruce, 2002).

Library and information science (LIS) professionals led the way in the early 1970s in conceptualizing this idea and its relationship to lifelong learning. As the environments of LIS professionals and academic libraries have changed, the abilities to find, access and effectively use information have also changed and broadened. What started as library orientation grew to be library instruction and bibliographic instruction and finally became information literacy. Information literacy according to Chartered Institute of Library and Information professionals (CILIP, 2014) can be defined as the recognition of when and why one needs information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner. European Communities (2007) noted that competency is a combination of knowledge, students are expected to be information providers and educators on graduation but they cannot play this role effectively without, acquiring information literacy Skills through their university education. As a result, LIS curriculum is developed in such a way that LIS students should graduate as information literates. They are expected to possess information literacy Skills, which will enable them to recognize when and why they need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate information ethically and legally.

This paper will give a review of literature as they relate to information literacy competency. The review is necessary to guide students and scholars of library and information science who may want to be exposed to the concepts and elements of information literacy. The paper will carry out review that will bother on the concept of information and information literacy as well as information literacy Skills. It will also review pool of views of scholars on information literacy Skills. It will finally take position on seeking behaviour among undergraduate students.

Concept of Information Literacy/Skills

Information literacy concept across the globe evolved from precursors such as library instruction, bibliographic instruction and user /reader education (Chevillotte, 2007; Fidzani, 2007; Fjallbrant, 2000; Homann, 2001; Lau, 2006; Pinto & Sales, 2006; Tolonen, 2006; Mittermeyer & Quirion, 2003; Sinikara & Jarvelainen, 2003; Virkus, 2003 and Neely, 2002). The information-literacy movement in European countries, similar to other countries, as recorded by Virkus (2003), evolved from precursors such as library instruction, bibliographic instruction and user/reader education. Virkus further note that most information literacy initiatives and programmes in Europe have been initiated recently; academic librarians in Europe have been involved in user education for many years. During the 1970s and 1980s, many academic libraries in the United Kingdom, Germany and Scandinavia started fairly ambitious programmes of user education, bibliographic instruction, or reader education and they have provided user education in the form of one or more of the following: short orientation courses in the use of the library, its information resources and catalogues for new students, and courses in information literacy for undergraduate and/or for postgraduate students. Many scholars believe that the movement of information literacy in African countries is similar to that of European programmes, which covered library orientation and bibliographic instruction to new students. Owusu-Ansah, (2003) opined that the concept of information literacy follows the same trend in Nigeria.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2003), in line with the opinions of other scholars, opined that the term information literacy has evolved over the past two decades in response to the changing requirements of higher education. From its beginnings as a form of library instruction, the concept now has been extended to describe a more comprehensive vision of teaching and learning in the academic world. Shenton (2009) concluded that:

Information literacy has certainly expanded greatly in scope from its antecedents as user education or bibliographic instruction, which emphasized the exploitation of library tools, such as indexes, catalogues and classification schemes, and the use of particular types of sources, to expansive skills sets that are today permeated by a more widely applicable problem-solving perspective (p. 226).

The unanimous views of different scholars on the concept of information literacy show that the term is not abstract or arbitrary but evolved from substance, such as library instruction/library orientation, bibliographic instruction, and user/reader education, to fill an obvious vacuum in the world of information conception, acquisition, and use for lifelong learning (Athiya, 2020).

The term information literacy was first introduced in 1974 by Paul Zurkowski, former president of the United States Industry Association, in a paper prepared for the National Commission for Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS), in which he talked about the need for people to become information literate, if they were to survive and compete in an emerging information society (Grassian & Kaplowitz, 2001; Horton, 2007; Kaushik & Mishra, 2009; Mittermeyer & Quirion, 2003). Zurkowski (as cited in Thomas, 2004) defined information literacy as "the ability to use techniques and skills for the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solution to a problem". Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, 2000), in their attempt to provide a universally accepted definition of information literacy, defined information literacy as 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. This definition and explanation given by ACRL, according to Ranaweera (2010); Bundy (2004), is considered the foundation for the worldwide concept of information literacy. Bundy (2004), in line with ACRL definition, refers to information literacy as the broad set of skills and understandings that enable a person to recognize information needs, decide which resources will best answer those needs, know how to use the resources effectively, and evaluate the information they found (Athiya, 2020).

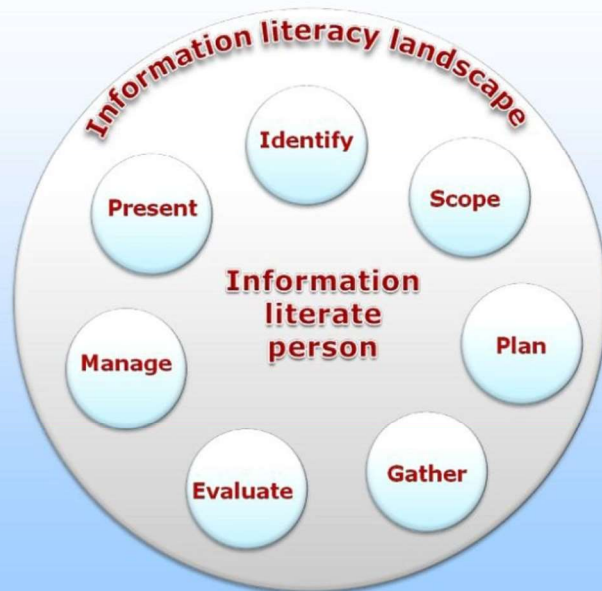
SCONUL's Seven Pillars of Information Literacy model

The United Kingdom's Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) published its information literacy model called the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy in 1999. According to (Webber, 2006), this model has been widely used in the United Kingdom and worldwide. However, in 2011, the SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy updated and expanded the model to reflect more clearly the range of different terminologies and concepts now

understood as information literacy. Furthermore, SCONUL (2011), information-literate researchers will demonstrate an awareness of how they gather, use, manage, synthesize, and ethically create information and data and will have the information skills to do so effectively. In other words, this new model defines the core Skills which include knowledge, skills and attitude that are the goals of information literacy development in higher education, with each core competency called a "pillar". Within each "pillar" a researcher can develop from "novice" to "expert" as they progress through their research life, although, as the information world itself is constantly changing and developing, it is possible to move down a pillar as well as progress up it. The pillars are envisioned as a circle or cycle, rather than a sequence, and individuals



Seven Pillars of Information Literacy



http://www.sconul.ac.uk/topics_issues/info_literacy/

Society of College, National and University Libraries

Concept of Skills/Competency

Competency is a term that is used both scientifically and in everyday language. Competency according to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1999) can be "attributed to individuals, social groups or institutions, when they possess or acquire the conditions for achieving specific developmental goals and meeting important demands presented by the external environment". Higher institutions especially university must educate, teach and prepare each student for lifelong learning, as a result, the review of the concept of competency in this particular study will focus on individual attribute of competency rather than the competence of a social group or institution. As indicated by Alberta Education (2010), there are many definitions used worldwide to define the term competency. OECD (1999) listed a descriptive list of nine different ways in which competency has been defined, described or interpreted theoretically. The list includes competency as: general cognitive ability; specialized cognitive skills; competence performance model; modified competence performance model; motivated action tendencies; action competence; key Skills; and meta-Skills.

OECD is of the view that a key competency is central competency:

- ❖ Upon which (many) others depend;
- ❖ Which facilitates understanding and learning a variety of different concepts, rules, principles, strategies, and skills; and
- ❖ Which could be applied to solve different problems in different situational contexts?

Key competency according to European Commission, (2004) represents a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, inclusion and employment which should have been developed by the end of compulsory schooling or training, and should act as a foundation for further learning as part of lifelong learning.

According to European Communities (2007), competency can be defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. On this regard, Albert Education (2011) defined competency as an interrelated set of attitudes, skills and knowledge which are drawn upon and applied to a particular context for successful learning. Albert Education further opined that the term competency and skills are often used interchangeably. As a broader concept, competency is not limited to cognitive elements (involving the use of theory, concept or tacit knowledge); it also encompasses functional aspects (involving technical skills) as well as interpersonal skills (example, social or organizational skills) and ethical values. A skill on the other hand, is ability to perform tasks and solve problems (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2008), and can be acquired in a matter of months while Skills are acquired over a number of years.

Information Literacy/ Skills

Information literacy skills, according to Wen and Shih (2008), are “the possession of the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes (the recognition of the value, functions and roles of information) to effectively apply information technology to collect, analyze, assess, organize and synthesize information for solving problems”. Information literacy competency, which is a combination of information literacy and competency, deals with a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes towards recognizing when and why information is needed, where to find it, how to evaluate, manage and apply it, synthesize, use and communicate it ethically and legally.

Contrary, Catts and Lau (2008), looking at information literacy Skills in the aspect of knowledge and skill alone stated that Skills in information literacy is the capacity of people to recognize their information needs; locate and evaluate the quality of information; store and retrieve information; make effective and ethical use of information and apply information to create and communicate knowledge. University of Liverpool Teaching and Learning Committee (2007) in the direction of information literacy skills alone defined information literacy competency as:

- ❖ the ability to articulate a need for information and identify a range of resources from which it might reasonably be met;
- ❖ the ability to construct strategies for locating information, including the identification of keywords and synonyms, constructing a search strategy using appropriate commands (for example, Boolean operators) and knowing how to broaden and narrow a search;
- ❖ the ability to locate and access information, including using the library catalogue, indexing services, citation services and databases, and using current awareness methods to keep up to date;
- ❖ the ability to compare and evaluate information obtained from different sources, including awareness of bias and authority issues and understanding of the peer review process of scholarly publishing; and the ability to organize bibliographic information and convey it to others, including constructing a personal bibliographic system, citing references appropriately and understanding issues of copyright and plagiarism.

Information seeking behaviour

Information-seeking behavior is a broad term encompassing the ways individuals articulate their information needs and seek, evaluate, select, and use information. In other words, information-seeking behavior is purposive and is a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of information seeking, the individual may interact with people, manual information systems, or with computer-oriented information systems. Information-seeking behavior involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought, and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought (Nwobasi, Uwa & Ossai, 2020). Barriers that prevent individuals from seeking and getting information are also of great importance in understanding the information-seeking behavior of individuals and organizations. Information use is a behavior that leads an individual to the use of information in order to meet his or her information needs. Information use is an indicator of information needs, but they are not identical. Information-seeking behavior is a broad term encompassing the ways individuals articulate their information needs, seek, evaluate, select, and use the needed information. Researchers are likely to perform different work roles, such as researcher, manager, administrator, educator, planner, supervisor, etc., simultaneously or at different stages of their careers. The role and related tasks prompt particular information needs, which in turn give rise to an information-seeking process. Several studies have shown a relationship between task complexity and the information-seeking behaviour of researchers (Nwobasi, Uwa & Ossai, 2020).

Barriers to Information Literacy competency

It may seem strange, given the compelling evidence supporting the need for information literacy skills, that such programmes, both non-curricular and curricular, are not more evident especially in institutions of higher education. In part this is because it requires an attitudinal change on the part of all stakeholders in higher education in particular-administration, academics, students and even librarians. One is tempted to wonder whether some librarians are loathe passing on the skills which they have in high order, fearing that they will be seen as redundant if they do so. Yet librarians, as practitioners par excellence in the field of information and knowledge, will always on the cutting edge of the management of the developing information and knowledge field, and thus will maintain and constantly enhance their leadership position (Athiya, 2019).

A considerable barrier for librarians is the reluctance of many teachers to acknowledge that librarians have a legitimate educative role and that they, too, can be accomplished teachers. In addition, libraries need to develop or access spaces appropriate for communicating these skills. There is no doubting that when collaborative partnerships can be established with teachers' information literacy programmers, they are more likely to be assured the support necessary for them to become a vital part of the educative process (Athiya, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

In the Information age the concept of literacy needs to be expanded to embrace information literacy. The ability to view information in its widest context, to determine needs and then locate, evaluate, organize and apply it is key skills. Librarians are well placed to have a key role in information literacy promotion as tutors and teachers of both non-curricular and curricular papers, as well as providing knowledge of and access to the world of Information (not just the resources found in or through the library) and to apply high level evaluative skills to these resources.

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