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# REVIEW OF INFORMATION LITERACY INSTRUCTION FOR ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper aims at reviewing the impact of information literacy instruction in academic libraries. It identified the importance of information literacy as the ability to find, evaluate, organize, communicate and use information effectively. The paper observed that information literacy instruction is a catalyst for effective academic engagement in higher educational institutions. Academic libraries are playing important role in providing information literacy instruction to students and faculty members. They promote information literacy through adopting appropriate models, standards and frameworks which are useful for successful instructions. Academic libraries provide classroom instruction, library consultations, research guides and tutorials as strategies of helping users to find, evaluate, organize, communicate and use information. Similarly, the paper analyzes various challenges facing academic libraries in providing information literacy instruction which include lack of quality information literacy programme, traditional instruction method, lack of favorable model and framework for developing countries, lack of multimedia resources and lack of collaboration. It recommends among others that academic libraries should design and deliver high quality information literacy instruction to students and faculty members through commitment and determination. They should also collaborate with faculties to promote information literacy and incorporate disciplines into the instruction process for better understanding of concepts and key elements.*

**Keywords:** Academic libraries, information literacy, instruction, students, faculty, higher educational institutions

## Introduction

Academic libraries are primarily established to provide services to academic community. This type of community comprised faculty members who conduct research, engage in classroom teaching and activities. On the

other hand, there are students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels who benefit from the services of academic libraries. Academic libraries acquire and organize information resources in order to support teaching, learning and research process in tertiary institutions. They also engage in assisting users to find and use information throughout their research and learning cycles. These roles enrich the scholarly experience and success of academic community. In the 21st century, academic libraries found it necessary to integrate information literacy instruction into their services with the aim of helping their users to make effective use of information resources and services.

Academic libraries are crucial to enhancing scholarly and intellectual activities in higher institutions of learning. Angela (2022) observed that academic libraries are working to convince their users to understand that information resources are important and relevant to their academic studies. Therefore, they provide motivation and instill research and critical thinking skills for effective utilization of resources. Academic libraries are influencing information seeking through handling different information needs. According to Mungwabi (2019) the effectiveness of information literacy in academic libraries entails assisting users to understand different media formats that can satisfy their information need. It also involves imparting information search and evaluation skills to academic library users. These activities help users to independently search and retrieve information from various media formats.

There is no doubt that lack of information literacy skills hampers effective access to information resources. In academic libraries, lack of provision of information literacy instruction creates gap and barriers to successful information utilization which further affect research output and scholarly communication process. Klomsri and Tedre (2016) opined that poor information literacy skills and practices are recognized as barriers to academic performance. A study conducted by Victor-Aigbodion (2022) found that information literacy skills are seen as determining factors that influence academic growth and research capabilities across various disciplines. Therefore, it has become necessary for academic libraries to provide information literacy instruction through classes, orientation programmes, seminars and workshops.

Information literacy instruction has great significance to teaching, learning and research productivity. According to Sakhawat, Tariq and Shahzad (2021) the practice of information literacy is popular in every field of study and learning environment. In addition, training courses and seminars improve user competencies and academic libraries apply useful models and frameworks to provide information literacy instruction. The purpose of using information literacy models and frameworks is to make sure that academic library has structure at hand that would guide information literacy instruction and help academic community acquire innovative skills of information search using digital and prints resources. Crawford and Irving (2012) stated that information literacy helps people to develop new skills and adoption of framework is important for today's learners. Several frameworks have been produced both at national and international level to direct libraries in providing information literacy instruction to their users.

**Background to Information Literacy**

Information literacy is one of the most important activities in higher institutions of learning that shapes and enhances experiences on utilization of library and information resources. The term "information literacy" was first formulated by Paul G. Zurkowsi in 1974. According to Zurkowsi, to become an information literate person must know how to use various types of information sources and tools in order to give information solutions for solving problems at work or in daily life situation. This definition also portrays a line between literate individual and information illiterate person. According to Leaning (2017) the concept information literacy was further advanced by Burchinal in 1976. Burchinal employed educational aspects into information literacy and recognized specific skills that are necessary.

Virkus (2009) opined that the term information literacy has been used in libraries to replace bibliographic instruction, library skills instruction and user education. In 1989, the American Library Association (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy Final Report highlighted the fundamentals of information literacy. In this report, information literacy was defined as "a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use the needed information effectively". Leaning (2017) stated that information literacy has been defined several times since its inception. For instance, Shapiro and Hughes (1996) examined the concept information literacy as follows:

a) Information literacy is the practical skills involved in effective use of information technology and information resources, either in print or electronic.
b) Information literacy is the new liberal arts which extends beyond technical skills and is conceived as the critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact.

Generally, information literacy requires set of abilities for individuals to be able to use information efficiently and ethically. In academic library environment, information literacy encompasses concepts like information skills, media literacy, research skills and information handling. Information literacy facilitates the process of information creation, distribution and utilization. It helps in supporting curriculum development and equips students to effectively communicate and share information that is useful for learning, assignment and projects.

**Conceptual Understanding of Information Literacy in Academic Libraries**

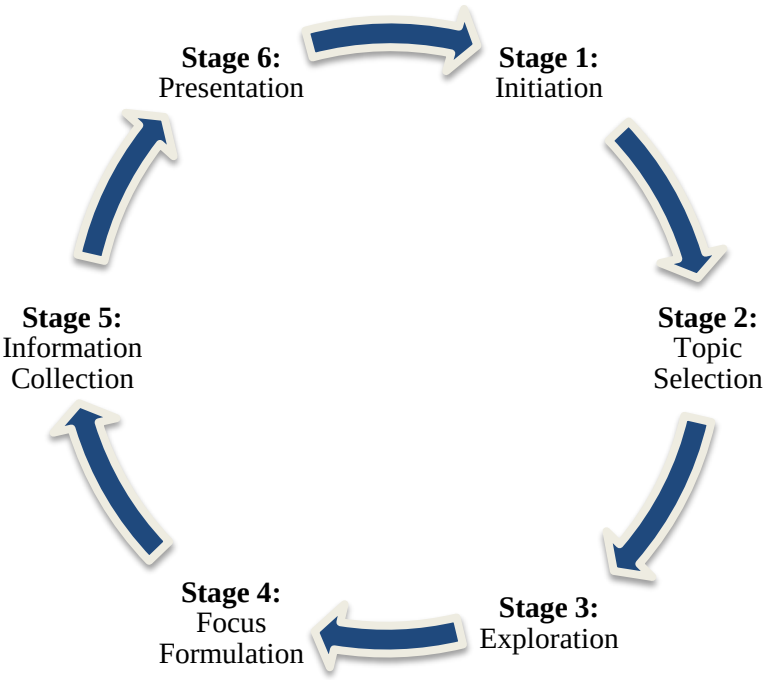
Information literacy is a concept that involves understanding of how information is created, retrieved, shared and valued. It entails the fact that librarians have responsibility to demonstrate the value of information to academic community in order to help them locate, evaluate, use and create information ethically and efficiently. According to Schulz-Jones (2017) understanding information literacy offers an opportunity for students to locate, use and evaluate information as well as using appropriate resources to produce high-quality assignments and projects. Other critical considerations involve students' ability to respect intellectual property, fair use and privacy. In addition, information literacy

serves as a building block for lifelong learning and independent thinking. It allows students to generate skills and evidence that assist their work and future life from multiple sources.

Academic libraries operate in a learning environment where information sources are valued and used for an informed problem solving. This notion calls for conceptualization of information literacy into all academic domains. This conceptualization is necessary before engaging in providing instruction and training that will allow individuals to gain necessary competencies (UNESCO, 2023). However, the concept of information literacy is now related with other concepts like media literacy, digital literacy, social media literacy and numerical literacy. These concepts are in whole adopted and used in academic library services and instruction.

**Use of Information Literacy Model in Academic Libraries**

The adoption and use of information literacy model is critical in academic libraries. Model serves as structure or templates that guide libraries in providing efficient information literacy instruction. Models assist in the design of information literacy instruction and facilitate an environment for interactive user engagement. Information literacy model can be diagrammatical representation or a framework. It gives learners opportunity to gain an overview of information literacy concepts. Model also allows librarians to demonstrate specific patterns and attributes of information literacy to their audience. There are several information literacy models enacted in order to help libraries render effective information literacy instruction. However, this paper adopted Kulthau model of Information Search Process. According to Kuhlthau, Heinstrom and Todd (2008) the model was formulated in 1980s and enhanced in the 1990s. It describes user experience in the process of information seeking. Kulthau developed six stages of human information search process based on feelings, thought, actions and strategies. The six stages of information search process are as follows:




i. *Initiation:* this is a stage where librarian trains users on how to initiate the information search process.
ii. *Topic selection:* in this stage librarian shows user how to recognize and choose appropriate information sources.
iii. *Exploration:* this stage is the process of discovery and librarian provides instruction on information searches through wide range of information sources.
iv. *Focus formulation:* here librarian teaches users how to apply critical thinking and problem solving to identify ideas.
*v. Information collection:* librarian teaches library user how to effectively gather information and construct strategies for locating information.
*vi. Presentation:* librarian shows users how to integrate new information into existing body of knowledge.

The importance of information literacy model cannot be over rated. Working with information literacy model in library enhances learners understanding of key elements and promote user experience. Libraries that apply model in teaching information literacy assist students to gain more experience and awareness in academic settings.

**Strategies of Information Literacy Instruction in Academic Libraries**

Academic libraries play significant role in information literacy instruction. This role is enhanced through strategies. There are various strategies adopted by libraries in order to render effective instruction to library users. In higher institution of learning, academic libraries weigh various choices of delivering instructions. The strategies are

developed by libraries to support instructions in a flexible and interactive manner. The City University of London (2023) recognized that information literacy strategies are adopted to enhance learners' skills and ability to understand social dimension of information and become an independent learner. It also helps learners to manage information and discover information in their own discipline. As part of information literacy strategies academic librarians provide the followings:

a) *Class Instruction in the Library*: here librarian serves as information literacy course instructor. The class instruction aims at providing sessions where students are taught how to define their information needs, concepts and how to develop information search in their specific areas. In this regard, librarian use teaching strategies and techniques like classroom lecture, video conferencing and online chat to deliver instruction on critical thinking, confidence and self-direction (Anna, Kaur and Idaya, 2023). However, library resources and tools are used in providing practical session and demonstrations to support students understanding of information literacy.

b) *Library Consultations:* this format of information literacy is delivered by consulting librarian. According to Anderson, Fisher and Walker (2021) library consultations involve interaction with patrons which provides opportunity for solving complex and difficult inquiries. Mostly, library consultation session is tailored towards solving individual needs. It is a kind of personalized user consultation where librarian engages in one on one interaction with users or face to face contact in order to demonstrate concepts of information literacy and render individual training to users.

*c)* *Research Guides:* this is a strategy that aims at providing research direction and guide to users through information literacy concepts. It entails application of instructions and guide on effective access to research materials, information searching tools, citation techniques, referencing and ethical sharing of research findings and publishing. Becker *et al* (2021) observe that research guides are key learning support tools of providing subject-based information to students which in addition supplement information literacy training.

d) *Online Tutorial*: this format of information literacy instruction is initiated to provide online mode of delivery using email, chat and social media. This strategy has become common approach of providing information literacy instruction in the digital age. It provides opportunity for individual and group discussion. The online mode of delivery is also useful in virtual and distance information literacy instructions. It assist users in developing search skills, finding scholarly information and searching specific databases (University of Wollongong Libraries, 2024)

UNESCO (2023) advocated for other strategies which are useful in information literacy instruction. These strategies involve assessment and recommendations on

ensuring that learners are able to understand information literacy and apply it in practical situations. Academic librarians should be able to deliver reflection and reaction papers, essays, lectures, case studies, audiovisual presentations, group learning activities and examine students' competencies through written test and examination. Also, strategies of information literacy instruction should comprised application of communication materials such as posters, brochures, social media cards, reports, stories, infographics and vlogs. Specially, vlogs are used as a new strategy of information literacy instruction using personal website or social media account where library users visit regularly to post short videos and tutorials.

**Capacity Building for Information Literacy Librarians in Academic Libraries**

In academic libraries there is need for enhancing the capacity of academic librarians who are seen as information literacy instructors. It is the way through which librarians are empowered to best use their knowledge, skills and time to teach students and faculty how to locate, evaluate and use information. Capacity building among librarians is necessary because it helps in updating their knowledge and enhancing their learning facilitation skills (Lau, 2006). Academic librarians play an active role in information literacy instruction; therefore, Stripling (1999) recommends that librarians as instructional facilitators should be given opportunity to gain advanced skills and expertise in information literacy in order to adequately support their users. They need to engage in professional growth through the following ways:

i. Developing their own information literacy skills
ii. Developing the ability to facilitate learning and teach critical thinking and inquiry
iii. Becoming responsible for their own learning, and their own technological skills
iv. Receiving constant library training, new skills and concepts
v. Participating in professional organizations, attending conferences and using technical literature
vi. Allowing adequate time for opportunities to collaborate with other librarians for offering and receiving information literacy and task related advice

Generally, capacity building for information literacy librarians in academic libraries can be provided to individual librarians or as comprehensive training programme to the entire library team. Stripling (1999) opined that librarian's training can be divided into separate sessions for basic, medium and advanced training. There should also be workshops and courses on information literacy instructions and techniques.

**Challenges of Information Literacy Instruction in Academic Libraries**

Traditionally academic libraries find themselves at the forefront of information literacy instruction. However, there are some identifiable challenges facing libraries in their effort to render good quality information literacy instruction. Banda and Mwabungulu (2019) observed that one of the cardinal challenges to information literacy is lack of quality information literacy programme. Also, there is lack of application of information literacy model in the design and delivery of information literacy instruction of some higher education institutions. This has created a huge gap in an

effort to deliver information literacy instruction. Similarly, some information literacy models were designed to favour libraries in the developed countries with little or no regards to libraries in developing countries (Banda and Mwabungulu, 2019).

There are poor information literacy policies and standards in most of the General Studies Programmes (GNS). Some libraries do not even provide information literacy toolkits to students and faculty. For example, in Nigeria most universities concentrate on traditional library instruction or provide use of library as course with little emphasis on information literacy as a new method or current trend in the information age. Students that fail to gain information literacy skills through the GNS programme "most likely fail to find their own way into the technology dominated world" (Omelurzo *et al*, 2017) In addition to this scenario, lack of multimedia instructional resources also serves as a challenge to successful information literacy instruction. Multimedia resources are required and incorporated into information literacy instruction. They are used for practical demonstration and training. Anyim (2018) noted that multimedia resources assist librarians in facilitating instruction and easily convey information to students. Therefore, information literacy instruction will not be effective without adequate and quality multimedia resources in place.

Another basic challenge is lack of collaboration between libraries and faculties in Nigerian higher institutions. As observed by Pham and Tanner (2015) although the importance of collaboration between libraries and faculties is generally accepted, but lack of collaboration is likely to have negative impact on information literacy instruction as specific disciplines will not have the chance of being incorporated into the instruction. On the other hand, students will perceive it to be of little value to them. In higher educational institutions, collaboration is seen as instructional strategy towards achieving learning objectives. The factors that affect collaboration in information literacy instruction between libraries and faculties include lack of commitment, lack of relationship, lack of respect for other colleagues, traditional perceptions, stereotypes of librarians, low respect of librarians' knowledge and contribution in academic settings (Dlamini, Mlambo and Masenya, 2021).

## Conclusion

Information literacy instruction is seen as the catalyst of effective academic engagement in higher educational institutions. It has been noted that academic libraries are playing important role in providing information literacy instruction to students and faculty members. They promote information literacy through adopting appropriate models, standards and frameworks which are useful for successful instructions. Also, academic libraries provide class instruction, library consultations, research guides and tutorials as strategies of helping users to find, evaluate, organize, communicate and use information effectively. Besides, there are various challenges facing academic libraries in providing information literacy instruction which include lack of quality information literacy programme, traditional instruction method, lack of favourable model and framework for developing countries, lack of multimedia resources and lack of collaboration.

## The Way Forward

In order to develop information literacy instruction for better user experience the

following points are hereby put forward for consideration:

1) Academic libraries should design and deliver high quality information literacy instruction to students and faculty members through commitment and determination.
2) Academic librarians in developing countries like Nigeria should design appropriate information literacy framework that would be suitable to curriculum and user needs in tertiary educational institutions.
3) Multimedia resources should be made available to academic libraries because they are very important components of information literacy instruction.
4) Academic libraries should collaborate with faculties by working together to promote information literacy and incorporating disciplines into the instruction process for better understanding of concepts and key elements.

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