Information Literacy Competence of Librarians in South West Nigerian University Libraries

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine librarians' information literacy skills and provide reliable data to support the study recommendations. The study used the survey approach. The sampling frame is the National Universities Commission approved list of universities in Nigeria as at August, 2012. Sampling of participating universities in the Southwest was by convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, while that for the study participants (librarians) was census. Except for their understanding of the role of natural language, reference citation, encyclopaedias, periodicals and search engines, the study revealed weaknesses in librarians' knowledge of each of the steps in the information research process, from identifying the concepts to using the results. This suggests that librarians are clearly deficient in the essential skills required for successful information research process. The study thus confirms the perceived negative impression of librarians' information literacy competency. The practical implication is that library users, which include the students, will not be able to receive proper instruction in information literacy skills and may therefore not be information literate. This will affect their effectiveness, efficiency and productivity at work after graduation. The social implication is that their graduates and other library users may not be able to function effectively in today's information society. To remedy the deficiencies, the study recommends regular training and re-training through professional development workshops, librarians' access to regular use of the Internet, and the review of the curriculum of the library schools to incorporate the teaching of Information Literacy with particular emphasis on the practical components.

Keywords

Introduction

With the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to information production, processing, packaging and dissemination; teaching, learning and research are taking on new shapes and boundaries particularly with the advent of the Internet. The impact has particularly changed how librarians access, manage and disseminate information. It has also changed their roles within the workplace and opened up an entirely new information arena within which to apply their unique information skills. As a consequence, what started in libraries as 'library orientation' grew to be 'library instruction' and 'bibliographic instruction' and finally became 'information literacy', which involves teaching users how to access, understand and use information effectively.

Williams and Zald (1997) note that s, tudents often lack the skills necessary to succeed in this rapidly changing information environment, and faculty needs training and support to make use of new technologies for effective teaching and learning. Thus, the current information environment provides an opportunity for librarians to play a key role in the evolution of an integrated information literacy curriculum/process. Their role is to empower users