Information Literacy Programmes in UAE: Contents, User Category, Mode preferred and Skills Required

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Abstract

Searching and learning to search the information by those in the field of higher education has become significant in information technological world. Library professionals have been involved in helping and training the users of higher education to use the information resources available in the libraries which enhance them to build their knowledge for their future. Information Literacy Programmes in the higher educational institutions are instruction to students in identification, utilization, and documentation of information; in other words the searching of the knowledge. The study is designed to gather information on the contents of information literacy programmes, the mode preferred and user category of the information literacy programmes of higher educational institutions in UAE. The authors also made an attempt to know the skills required to offer information literacy programmes.

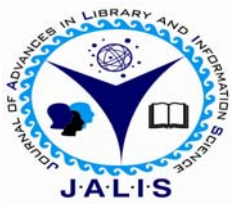
Keywords

Literacy, information and communication technology, University Libraries.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Information explosion takes place in the world everyday and the quantity of information is not measurable to some extent. It has been increasing faster than anything else that we generate. Information is getting accumulated rapidly by means of books, articles, journals, e-resources, etc. After the basic need of food, shelter and cloth, information has become another imperative need for human beings. Everyone is in search of information to upgrade his/her social and economic status in the society. Scientists, researchers, teachers and students take much advantage of the growth of information. Sometimes they are flooded and overloaded with the flow of information. Searching and learning to search the information by those in the field of higher education has become significant in modern information technological world.

Library professionals have been involved in helping and training the users of higher education in using the information resources available in the libraries and make them aware of services and resources. The terms used a couple of decades ago to indicate the process of helping and training the users to locate information and other resources are "library orientation" and "user education". However in modern information technology era, the library user education has to get new term 'Information Literacy'.

1.1 INFORMATION LITERACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Information literacy was not a new concept in higher education. In the dramatic shift of information economy, the skills required to retrieve the needed information is information literacy. As the American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (January 10, 1989, Washington, D.C.) says "Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand." In January 2000, the Association of College and Research Libraries Task Force on Information Literacy Competency standards and the American Association for Higher Education approved the "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education". The Association of College and Research Libraries,

(ACRL-ALA) recognized the changing roles and requirements of skills for academic librarians in information age. To assist with professional development in improving instruction, an Instruction Section Proficiencies Task Force was formed in 2004. A portion of their charge included, "to develop a list of proficiencies required of instruction librarians and other librarians who contribute to instructional services and programs at their institutions, focusing on broad areas of proficiency rather than a comprehensive list of skills" (ACRL, 2007, p.1). Thus the information literacy programmes in higher educational institutions are being implemented. Library professionals have been on the track to teach information literacy programmes for the benefit of users.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Karisiddappa, C.R.and Iqbalahmad U. Rajgoli (2008) made a case study of selected library and information centres of higher learning and research in Bangalore, India on information literacy programmes and practices. They concluded that the mission of IL was never ending. To cope-up with the growth of knowledge, users and information packages, there was always a need to master the technologies. Therefore, discussions, surveys and further intensive researches become inevitable to promote IL movement in any country. Emmanuel E. Baro and Timi Zuokemefa (2011). The authors examined the various information literacy (IL) practices in university libraries in Nigeria, to identify the likely barriers facing information literacy programmes in Nigeria, and to provide suggestions on how best to improve the IL practices. Barriers such as lack of interest by students, teachers, and management, inadequate human resources to handle IL training, lack of facilities, low acceptance of online IL delivery approach and absence of IL policy were identified as factors militating against librarians' efforts when advocating and providing IL programmes in university libraries in Nigeria. The findings may be of helpful to librarians who want to improve on their IL programmes in university libraries in Nigeria and other developing countries.

Emmanuel Baro, Felicia Doubra Seimode and Vera Godfrey. (2013). This was a case study on information literacy (IL) practices in university libraries in Nigeria, the UK and the US. An online questionnaire was used for data collection. University libraries in the UK and US provided IL training in all the areas mentioned compared to university libraries in Nigeria. Authors suggested having effective IL training programmes; university authorities in developing countries should see the need to provide the necessary facilities such as computers with stable internet access in university libraries, regular power supplies, and training of librarians on IT. Most of all, librarians should collaborate with other stakeholders in their institutions to ensure an IL policy formulation and implementation in their institutions. Kulthida Tuamsuk (2013). This research studied the situation of information literacy instruction (IL) in Thai higher education in terms of the responsible units, teaching patterns, course details and content, teaching and learning methods, learning assessment and evaluation, and the role of libraries in promoting IL instruction in universities. All universities assess and evaluate the student's learning outcomes from attendance, participation, and examination. With respect to libraries' roles, training in IL in various topics all through each academic year should be organized together with lectures on IL as a part of students' orientation session.

Abbas Mohamed Omar, Haji Ali Haji and Khamis Hamad Mwitumbe. (2014). The authors examined then situation and the future of information literacy programs in Zanzibar universities by looking at information literacy awareness, the extent of information literacy provision and the role of university libraries in promoting it. The findings showed that a certain degree of information literacy awareness exists among library and academic staff, though promotion and provision of its skills are still in the infancy stages. Inadequate numbers of qualified information literacy specialists, lack of background in teaching information literacy and lack of cooperation between librarians and faculty members were identified as the sources of the problems. Based on the findings, the researchers made a number of recommendations to address the shortcomings, which included to organize information literacy seminars and workshops, to create awareness programs, to design and implement information literacy curriculum and course content. Munazza Jabeen, et al (2014) explored the information literacy (IL) practices, methods and techniques being implemented in China's university and research libraries. The authors selected a concurrent mixed-methods research design. University libraries performed better in implementing IL programs compared with the research institutes' libraries. A number of gaps existed between university and research libraries in terms of information literacy practices. These gaps can be

filled by overcoming barriers such as the absence of inactivity of professional library associations, the lack of government interest, the lack of faculty collaboration, and the failure to promote IL programs among the user community. In the light of this research, it is suggested that the Chinese government should pay keen attention to formulate a national IL policy.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study on the information literacy programmes in UAE.
2. To know the contents included in the information literacy programmes.
3. To find the category of users the information literacy programmes being offered.
4. To identify the methods of information literacy programmes being offered.
5. To find the skills required for LIS professionals to offer the information literacy programmes.

4. METHODOLOGY

The literature on Information Literacy Programmes (ILP) has been reviewed from various resources. Based on the review of literature, a five point scale questionnaire has been constructed to collect the data for this study. An online questionnaire was designed using Google docs and sent via email to LIS professionals working in higher educational institutions in UAE. Researcher had also personally visited few institutions to collect data. Respondents were reminded over phone and mail by the researcher. Most of the respondents were Heads and Senior Librarians, Librarians and Assistant Librarians.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

There are 57 professionals responded by recording their data. The data received to the first author's Gmail account which was stored in the Google spreadsheet. Data of the respondents were considered for analysis of the study.

5.1. Level of Integration of Information Literacy Programmes

From the Table 1, it is clear that majority of the respondents 21 (36.8%) offered the information literacy programmes only occasionally when need aroused and 14 (24.6%) offered only during the beginning of a semester. Only 5 (8.8%) respondents each offered the information literacy programmes as compulsory and electives and that too without credit. However 5 (8.8%) respondents offered ILPs compulsory with credit and 3 (5.3%) offer electives with credit. The remaining 4 (7%) provided the ILPs annual only. More measures need to be taken to offer the ILPs compulsory with credit which leads to reach the ILPs to all the students of any institutions.

Table 1. *Level of integration of Information Literacy Programmes (ILPs)*

Level of Integration of ILPs	Total	%
Electives without credit	5	8.8
Electives with credit	3	5.3
Compulsory without credit	5	8.8
Compulsory with credit	5	8.8
Offered only occasionally when need aroused	21	36.8
Offered only during semester begins	14	24.6
Offered only annual	4	7

5.2. The contents that were included in Information Literacy Programmes

Here the five-point scale format is used to know the contents that were included in information literacy programmes. The analysis of this data is shown in Table 2.

63.2% of the respondents always included about the institute library's rules, policies, resources, services, 17.5% included often, 14% included sometimes, 1.8% included rarely and 3.5% never included. 66.7% of the respondents always included systems used in their institute library i.e. classification, catalogue, website, etc. where as 17.5% included often, 10.5% included sometimes, 1.8% included rarely and 3.5% never included. 82.5% of the respondents always included use of library resources such as print, e-databases, e-journals, internet search skills, etc., 15.8% included often and only 1.8% never included. 64.9% of the respondents always included research process (identify information resources, literature search, evaluate, ethical use of Information (plagiarism)). Where as 24.6% included

often, 8.8% included sometimes and 1.8% never included.
40.4% of the respondents always included process of research publication, keeping up to date of the research area, etc., 28.1% included often, 19.3% included sometimes, 8.8% included rarely and 3.5% never included.

Table 2. *Contents of Information Literacy Programmes (ILPs)*

Contents	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
About the Institute Library- Rules, Policies, Resources, Services, Contact, etc.	36 (63.2%)	10 (17.5%)	8 (14%)	1 (1.8%)	2 (3.5%)
Systems used in the Institute Library– Classification, Catalogue, Website, etc.	38 (66.7%)	10 (17.5%)	6 (10.5%)	1 (1.8%)	2 (3.5%)
Use of Library Resources – Print, E-databases, E-journals, Internet Search Skills, etc.	47 (82.5%)	9 (15.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)
Research Process – Identify Information Resources, Literature Search, Evaluate, Ethical use of Information (plagiarism), Citation and References, etc.	37 (64.9%)	14 (24.6%)	5 (8.8%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)
Process of Research Publication, Keeping up to date of the research area, etc.	23 (40.4%)	16 (28.1%)	11 (19.3%)	5 (8.8%)	2 (3.5%)

5.3. The category of users the information literacy programmes being offered.

Here the five-point scale format is used to know the category of users the information literacy programmes being offered. The analysis of this data is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Category of users for Information Literacy Programmes (ILPs)*

Category of users	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Students	46 80.7%)	8(14%)	2 (3.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)
Research scholars	20 35.1%)	8(14%)	11(19.3%)	7 (12.3%)	11(19.3%)
Faculty	17 29.8%)	11(19.3%)	25(43.9%)	1(1.8%)	3 (5.3%)
Technical staff	6(10.5%)	6(10.5%)	23 (40.4%)	11(19.3%)	11(19.3%)
Non technical staff	5 (8.8%)	0 (0%)	19(33.33%)	16 28.1%)	17 29.8%)

80.7% of the respondents always offered the information literacy programmes, 14% offered often, 3.5% offered sometimes and 1.8% never offered to student's category. 35.1% of the respondents always offered the information literacy programmes, 14% offered often, 19.3% offered sometimes, 12.3% offered rarely and 19.3% never offered to research scholars.29.8% of the respondents always offered the information literacy programmes, 19.3% offered often, 43.9% offered sometimes, 1.8% offered rarely and 5.3% never offered to faculty. 40.4% of the respondents sometimes offered the information literacy programmes, 10.5% offered always and often, where as 19.3% offered rarely and never offered to technical staff. 29.8% of the respondents never offered, 28.1% rarely offered, 33.33% sometimes offered the information literacy programmes and 8.8% offered always to non technical staff.

5.4. Mode of information literacy programmes being offered.

Here the five-point scale format is used to find the methods of information literacy programmes being offered. The analysis of this data is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *Mode of Information Literacy Programmes (ILPs) being offered.*

Mode of ILPs	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Formal Lecture method	24 42.1%)	18(31.6%)	7 (12.3%)	2 (3.5%)	6(10.5%)
In-house Library Tour	15 26.3%)	26(45.6%)	12(21.1%)	1 (1.8%)	3 (5.3%)
Instructions / Training	23 40.4%)	22 38.6%)	9(15.8%)	0 (0%)	3 (5.3%)
Brochures/ Pamphlets/ Manuals/ Guides	14 24.6%)	18(31.6%)	16 (28.1%)	3 (5.3%)	6(10.5%)
Online or E-learning method through WebPages and intranet portal	20 35.1%)	17 29.8%)	8(14%)	5 (8.8%)	7 (12.3%)
Audio / Video clipping presentations	15(26.3%)	13(22.8%)	9 (15.8%)	8(14%)	12(21.1%)
Seminars/Workshops	11(19.3%)	17(29.8%)	15 (26.3%)	7(12.3%)	7(12.3%)
Library Newsletters	9 (15.8%)	8(14%)	12(21.1%)	10(17.5%)	18(31.6%)
Social Networks	9 (15.8%)	10(17.5%)	14(24.6%)	7 (12.3%)	17(29.8%)

42.1% of the respondents preferred always, 31.6% preferred often, 12.3% preferred sometimes, 3.5% preferred rarely the formal lecture method and 10.5% never preferred the formal lecture method. 45.6% of the respondents preferred often, 26.3% preferred always, 21.1% preferred sometimes, 1.8% preferred rarely the in-house library tour and 5.3% never preferred the in-house library tour. 40.4% of the respondents preferred always, 38.63% preferred often, 15.8% preferred sometimes instructions and training method and 5.3% never preferred instructions and training method. 31.6% of the respondents used often, 28.1% used sometimes, 24.6% used always, 5.3% used rarely brochures, pamphlets, manuals and guides to offer information literacy programmes and 10.5% never used. 35.1% of the respondents offered always, 29.8% offered often, 14% offered sometimes, 8.8% offered ILPs through online or e-learning method through webpage and intranet portal and 12.3% never offered through this method. 26.3% of the respondents offered always, 22.8% offered often, 15.8% offered sometimes, 14% offered ILPs using audio video clipping presentations and 21.1% never offered using audio video clipping presentations. 29.8% of the respondents preferred often, 26.3% preferred sometimes, 19.3% preferred always, 12.3% preferred rarely seminars and workshops to offer ILPs and 12.3% never preferred seminars and workshops to offer ILPs.

5.5. Skills required for LIS professionals to offer the information literacy programmes.

Here the five-point scale format is used to know the skills required for LIS professionals to offer the information literacy programmes. The analysis of this data is shown in Table 5.

61.4% of the respondents always, 26.3% often, 10.5% sometimes felt that information literacy curriculum knowledge skill was required to offer ILPs and 1.8% never felt that the skill was required.57.9% of the respondents always, 24.6% often, 14% sometimes, 1.8% rarely felt that information literacy integration skill was required to offer ILPs and 1.8% never felt that the skill was required.49.1% of the respondents always, 26.3% often, 21.1% sometimes, 1.8% rarely felt that information literacy programmes design skill was required to offer ILPs and 1.8% never felt that the skill was required.63.2% of the respondents always, 24.6% often, 8.8% sometimes, 1.8% rarely felt that presentation skill was required to offer ILPs and 1.8% never felt that the presentation skill was required to offer ILPs.63.2% of the respondents always, 22.8% often, 10.5% sometimes, 1.8% rarely felt that language and communication skills were required to offer ILPs and 1.8% never felt that the language and communication skills were required to offer ILPs.49.1% of the respondents always, 31.6% often, 17.5% sometimes felt that information technology skills were required to offer ILPs and 1.8% never felt that the information technology skills were required to offer ILPs.

Table5. *Skills required for LIS professionals to offer information literacy programmes (ILPs)*

Skills Required to offer ILPs	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Information Literacy Curriculum Knowledge skill	35 61.4%)	15(26.3%)	6(10.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)
Information Literacy Integration skill	33 57.9%)	14 24.6%)	8(14%)	1 (1.8%)	1 (1.8%)
Information Literacy Programmes Design skill	28 49.1%)	15 (26.3%)	12(21.1%)	1 (1.8%)	1(1.8%)
Presentation skill	36 63.2%)	14 24.6%)	5 (8.8%)	1(1.8%)	1 (1.8%)
Language & Communication skills	36 63.2%)	13(22.8%)	6(10.5%)	1 (1.8%)	1 (1.8%)
Information technology skills	28 49.1%)	18(31.6%)	10(17.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.8%)
Soft skill / Interpersonal skills	31(54.4%)	19(33.3%)	4 (7%)	2(3.5%)	1 (1.8%)
Assessment & Evaluation skills	25(43.9%)	16(28.1%)	12 (21.1%)	1(1.8%)	3(5.3%)
Bird's-eye view of User's Subject	25(43.9%)	13(22.8%)	12 (21.1%)	5(8.8%)	2(3.5%)

6. CONCLUSION

Change is the law of nature. From Paleolithic era to modern electronic era, humans tried for new information to build their knowledge. In the way, information explosion has occurred which are being stored in various forms. Searching for information is becoming the essential skill for any human to boost his/her knowledge which enables to strengthen their academic, social and economic status. This searching and learning to search the information to be practiced during the first degree programmes. This information literacy is the gaining momentum in higher educational institutions. Here the Library and Information Science professionals comes to the picture in providing lifelong learning skills and information literacy skills to the users' which leads knowledge acquisition. From this study that Information Literacy Programmes offered are based on many aspects such as contents, users' category, mode and skills of LIS personnel. Besides that, as Information Literacy Programmes are positively perceived by the respondents, we LIS professionals must take initiation for Information Literacy Programmes which leads to the lifelong learning skill to the user community and LIS professionals must enhance their skills required to offer Information Literacy Programmes. Lastly the LIS professionals also get better representation in the higher education field and in the society through the Information Literacy Programmes.

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