

The background of the journal cover is a photograph of a desk. In the foreground, there is a spiral-bound notebook with a pen resting on it. A pair of glasses is placed on the notebook. To the left, a small stack of books is visible, with one book titled 'Webster's Dictionary'. A pen holder with several pens is also present. The overall lighting is warm and slightly dim, creating a scholarly atmosphere.

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## INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMME: STRATEGY FOR EVOLVING THE NIGERIAN PSYCHE

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines information literacy as an educational concept which must be explored by students in higher education. The concept has to do with an individual's recognition of the need for information, exploring ways to get information, evaluating the information and using the information to solve practical problems. Therefore information literacy programmes that illustrate best practices were highlighted. Ways through which the Nigerian psyche can be evolved through information literacy programmes were discussed. Information literacy skills which are part of strategic information literacy programmes were also highlighted since information is a function of the society. The librarians' role in information literacy delivery was discussed and how it could help re-brand the minds of our teeming youths towards socially acceptable standards.*

### Introduction

In this information technological age, information literacy has gained prominence as an educational concept. There is no particular outlined definition for the concept. However, many authors have made an attempt at defining it comprehensively. Ojedokun (2007), states that the concept of information literacy presupposes that an individual recognises the need for information, and knows how to find, evaluate, use and subsequently communicate it effectively to solve particular problems or to make decisions. The author states further that it is of utmost importance to note that whether information comes from the internet or World Wide Web, online databases, books, government departments, films, conversations, posters, pictures of other images, or any number of other possible sources, inherent in the concept

of information literacy is the ability to understand and critically evaluate the information. Similarly, American Library Association (1989) viewed information literacy as a situation whereby a person is able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information. Information literacy as a concept embodies both skills and competencies. If a learner possesses information literacy skills, he is thought of as a competent participant in the information age. Thus, information literacy equips the information users with the critical skills necessary to become independent life long learners (Igwebuike : 2008).

### Literature Review

Information literacy best practices require that the programme should receive a high level of administrative and institutional support, both within the library and at the highest administrative levels of the institution (Ojedokun, 2007). It demands that librarians collaborate their efforts with faculty and are evaluated and reinforced. Information literacy programmes entail fine-tuning the curriculum to accommodate classroom and online learning experiences. Rader (2003) subscribed to this when he stated that faculty and librarians can teach models together, both for classroom use and online. A detailed account of best practices characteristics are contained in the document titled: "Characteristics of programs of information Literacy that illustrate best practices" published by Institute for Information Literacy of the Association of College and Research Librarians (ACRL). Subsequently, the Association of College and Research Librarians Standards and Guidelines (2005) had identified five standards to follow in designing information literacy programmes that illustrate best practices. They are that:

- (i) The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.
- (ii) The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.
- (iii) The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically, and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
- (iv) The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
- (v) The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information ethnically and legally.

Information literacy programme is a prerequisite for higher education. It entails students using information sources to solve educational and research

problems. Information literacy, incorporated into programmes in higher education can enhance the attainment of best results which include the re-branding of the Nigerian psyche. Such programmes could be accomplished by making it a foundational course or introductory requirement in the curriculum for students in order to boost their information needs. This agrees with the Federal Government's Millennium Development Goal (MDG) programme of NEEDS, SEEDS and LEEDS, which emphasize the assurance "that the Nigerian teeming population is empowered with knowledge and economic wisdom" (Igwebuike:2008). In agreement, Etim (2008) concluded that Information Literacy is a means of achieving goals, developing knowledge and potentials required to serve society.

The new information age with its impact on youth development, high societal demands, influence of the moral decadence that pervades society, has implication for youth re-orientation, and one way of doing this is to ginger youths to discover by themselves how to be useful both to themselves and the society at large. This is to say that youths who are equipped with the benefit of the information literacy programme would be sound and well grounded individuals that will protect and project the much cherished societal values.

#### **Building the Nigerian Psyche through Information Literacy Programme**

The 1979 and 1989 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has entrenched its national goals in the second national development plan in its bid for social justice. These goals include:

- (i) A free and democratic society,
- (ii) A just and egalitarian society,
- (iii) A united, strong and self-reliant nation,
- (iv) A great and dynamic economy and
- (v) A land of full and bright opportunities for all her citizens. Federal Ministry of Education (2004)

However, the attainment of these objectives can only be achieved through laudable educational programmes channelled at improving the information utilization habits of youths who are indeed nation builders.

Recently, the vices existing in our society as a result of vices like kidnapping, cultism, and arm robbery are occasioned by poor information handling behaviour. If indeed the national philosophy is to be attained, Information literacy programme must be incorporated into the Nigerian higher education curriculum. Moral decadence has pervaded the Nigerian society as a result of immoral behaviours such as lack of respect for constituted authority, certificate forgery, malpractice, stealing, greed, robbery, lawlessness, etc. The menace seems to spread like wild fire because there is moral laxity even among those who are expected to be models in the society. Government, stakeholders,

lecturers, as well as librarians must therefore infuse ways through which the society could be made up of informed and literate youths who will in turn use the literacy acquired to become useful citizens of our dear nation.

Information Literacy programmes can then serve as a measurable tool for solving social programmes and enhancing the moral well being of the Nigerian society. Etim (2010) thus highlights the characteristics of informed students to include that:

- (i) They are competent independent learners that know their information needs and actively engage in the world of ideas.
- (ii) They display confidence in their ability to solve problems and know what relevant information is and manage technology tools to access information and to communicate effectively.
- (iii) They operate comfortably in situations where there are multiple answers as well as those with no answers.
- (iv) They hold high standards for their work and create products.
- (v) They are flexible, can adapt to change and are able to function independently and in groups, whether information comes from a computer, a book, a government official, a film, a conversation, a poster or any number of other possible sources. Inherent in the concept of information literacy is the student's ability to dissect and understand what he can see on pages or television screen, in posters, pictures and other images as well as what he hears. Information literacy as a concept is applicable to all disciplines and to all levels of education. It is a foundation to functional and lifelong learning. Therefore, for an individual to create a positive impact in a nation such as ours, he must adapt to information literacy skills which are summed up by Eisenberg and Johnson (2002) and commonly referred to as the big six: Task definition, information seeking strategies, location and Access, use of Information, Synthesis, and Evaluation. Ojedokun (2007) refers to this as (TILUSE). The first step in the information problem – solving process is

- (i) Task definition which basically has to do with the realisation of an information need.
- (ii) Information seeking strategies which involve the development of a plan for searching the formulated information through electronic information resources with guided queries.
- (iii) Location and Access involving the use of information resource tools such as print, audio-visual and computerized resources to locate information.
- (iv) Use of information which involves an individual's screening of these information resources to ascertain which is relevant.
- (vi) Synthesis which involves the organisation and analysing of information to solve practical problems.



- (vii) Evaluation involving the re-examination of information whenever the need arises.

**Librarians Role in Information Literacy Delivery.**

Information literacy is applicable to all disciplines including Library and Information Science. Within the library and information Science discipline, it has to do with a professional librarian and information scientist helping an individual showcase his full potentialities in handling information literacy skills. These skills as enumerated above include: identifying a problem that must be defined; executing ways to find the information; sitting and ascertaining ways of getting the required information resources, utilization of relevant information; organising and analysing the information and finally, appraising the information. In a tabular form, the librarians' role in Information Literacy delivery is presented thus:

**TABLE 1: THE LIBRARIAN AND INFORMATION LITERACY DELIVERY**

INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS	THE LIBRARIANS' DELIVERY PROCESS
Task Definition	Ask students why they need the information, ascertain the relevance of the information, guide them to particular sources of information needed, like journals, literature etc.
Information seeking Strategies	Select resources best suited to the students' need whether, printed, electronic, published or unpublished.
Locate and Access	Teach students to use the library catalogue(s) in a bid to access information resources. Teach them to use Boolean operators (i.e. AND, OR and NOT) to link the search terms when searching online databases for easy retrieval.
Use of Information	Teach students new ways of connecting and operating Information Technology with a view to accessing information. Teach them process, give guides and manuals associated with such tasks.
Synthesis	Teach them to organise analyse and communicate information using database or spreadsheet.
Evaluation	Teach them to form guided queries in an attempt to appraise the quality of information. Such guided queries should include author, content, authority, currency and accessibility.

**Challenges and the Way Forward**

- (i) The major challenge in the utilisation of Information Literacy Programmes is the inadequate information dissemination strategies (such as current awareness service, selective dissemination of information, electronic information, information packaging and repackaging) to accommodate the

needs of our youths. The implication of this is that library delivery tools, methodologies and curriculum implementation must be dynamic to match literacy needs of students.

- (ii) Emerging technological literacy skills which is not emphasised in our institution of higher learning has continually posed serious setbacks to the Information Technology (IT) tools and resources. Therefore to keep in line with today's wireless society, the curriculum to be designed must consider literacy beyond the confines of reading and writing or print media to the electronic formats. This requires that the curriculum pays attention to training in acquisition and utilisation of information technology skills, Udofia (2006).

- (iii) Another major challenge is the improper access to library resources by students to aid individualised and independent learning. In this "fast moving" society, there is need for students to get closer to the library (information resources) for advanced skills that will keep them equipped and informed.

- (iv) Non integration of campus wide information resources (i.e. in libraries and media centres) in institutions of higher learning is another challenge facing the implementation and utilisation of information literacy programmes. Therefore librarians as information experts should help students discover the wide myriad of opportunities available to them when they utilise information resources for the purpose of becoming literate, efficient, disciplined and responsible citizens which the MDG propagates.

- (v) To re-brand the Nigerian psyche towards greater educational goals and by implication societal goals, there is growing need for librarians as information agents to encourage students to tap from this survival skill in order to become competent participants in this information age. Thus, Librarians should serve as consultants working in collaboration with course lecturers to form a synergy between information literacy and other disciplines in the curriculum. This will thus make the stages in the information literacy paradigm, a functional basis for the re-branding of the psyche of Nigerian Youths

**Conclusion**

Information Literacy Programme is the basis for developing the moral renaissance of Nigerian youths. If indeed information literacy is to be taught in tertiary institutions, the faculties must collaborate with librarians to select, analyze, organize and communicate best strategies to use information literacy to change the perception of youths from vices towards information problem solving strategies, which could in turn make them useful to themselves and the society at large.

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