

Supporting Information Literacy Skills of Students for a Successful Transition to Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges for Libraries in the Digital Era

Josiline Phiri Chigwada, Bindura University of Science Education, Bindura, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

A survey was undertaken on how libraries are supporting information literacy to primary and secondary school students for a successful transition to higher education. Thirty-five librarians were purposively selected and questionnaires were sent and telephone interviews done to understand the opportunities and challenges that are encountered in imparting information literacy skills to students in preparing them for higher education. The results revealed that there are information literacy programmes in group A schools and universities. It was discovered that tertiary institutions do mentorship programmes and train teacher and school librarians on how to offer information literacy sessions. The greatest opportunity was the availability of information communication technologies (ICTs) in most of the schools and the support that is offered by the government towards the use of ICTs in learning. However, the major challenge is there are few online resources that are locally produced. The author recommends the need to produce more local content online for the primary school students.

KEYWORDS

Information Literacy, Research Skills, Ruzivo Digital Learning, Transition to Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the information communication technologies had changed the way learners access materials in schools. Students are now expected to do research online and in order to get the materials that they need, they have to be information literate and possess the research skills that are needed to navigate on the internet. A study to understand how librarians are helping learners to prepare them for higher education was done in 35 libraries so as to see how primary and secondary school learners are able to smoothly move to higher education. Information literacy teaching is prevalent in academic institutions in Zimbabwe whereby the library is actively involved in teaching students how to access and use information resources as pointed out by Kagwiro (2017).

WHAT IS INFORMATION LITERACY?

The American Library Association (ALA, 1989) defines information literacy as the ability to locate, access, search, evaluate and use information in various contexts. The advent of information

DOI: 10.4018/IJLIS.2019010102

Copyright © 2019, IGI Global. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global is prohibited.

communication technologies led to an information overload leading to the need for learners to have information literacy skills in order to navigate the digital world. Learners should be able to identify relevant and reliable information to answer their information needs. In order to accomplish this, information literacy and research skills should be embedded in these youngsters at an early age. Information literacy skills are also regarded as a lifelong learning skill which can be used beyond primary, secondary or tertiary education.

IL PROGRAMMES IN ZIMBABWEAN SCHOOLS

There isn't much literature which documents how information literacy is taught in primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe leading to this study. Most of the studies concentrate on the teaching of information literacy in institutions of higher learning (Kagwiro, 2017; Chisita, 2011; Mugwisi, 2015). Studies from other countries such as Singapore, Namibia, South Africa, Nigeria, China, Australia, and Canada among others (Foo et al., 2013; Foo, 2017; Forgett, 2003; Wang and Liu, 2017; Ogbonna and Eze, 2015; Majid et al., 2016) indicated that information literacy is taught from primary education and there are standards that were put in place by the governing bodies for quality control purposes. Assessment of IL programmes is also done in these schools to ensure that the impact of the programme is known and also to increase student learning and also to strengthen the existing programmes. It is done in the form of knowledge tests and surveys, performance assessments or informal assessments. According to Abilock (2007), Ivanitskaya, DuFord et al. (2008), and Schloman and Gedeon (2007) there are various tests which can be used to assess IL including Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS), Tool for Real-time Assessment of Information Literacy (TRAILS) and Research Readiness Self-Assessment (RRSA).

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN OFFERING IL?

According to ALA (2010) reading is a foundational skill for 21st-century learners. Guiding learners to become engaged and effective users of ideas and information and to appreciate literature requires that they develop as strategic readers who can comprehend, analyze, and evaluate text in both print and digital formats. Learners must also have opportunities to read for enjoyment as well as for information. School librarians are in a critical and unique position to partner with other educators to elevate the reading development of the young generation. These young learners should be able to determine authority and accuracy of information with the help of school librarians.

School librarians collaborate with classroom teachers in teaching research skills and the success of any reading promotion and instruction activity is shared by the whole school community and other stakeholders such as publishers and parents. However, in the process, school libraries serve as hubs for information literacy in the schools according to ALA (2010) whereby school librarians play a leadership role in developing and promoting reading strategies. This is because school librarians provide open non-restricted access to a variety of information sources and they do collection development that reflects the curriculum and the different learning needs of the school community. After acquiring the information sources, they organise them to ensure that they can be easily retrieved by the clientele. School librarians partner with classroom teachers, parents, publishers and other literacy people to making reading initiatives so that the learners would enjoy reading. This collaboration would ensure that learners would have reading time and they would develop intellectual behaviours that would be needed for future academic pursuits and lifelong learning. It would also help to stimulate and reinforce a reading culture within the school at the same time making the book pay.

A number of activities can be done to entice learners to attend information literacy sessions even if they are not time tabled. School librarians can create user friendly environments as they interact with learners when they visit the library. They can also participate in delivering annual programmes of oral language activities, writing and reading as well as organising special events that support

5 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/article/supporting-information-literacy-skills-of-students-for-a-successful-transition-to-higher-education/214910

Related Content

Research on the Uniqueness and Characteristic Development of University Library Cultural Services: Practices at Wuhan University Library

Xincai Wang and Xin Xie (2020). *International Journal of Library and Information Services* (pp. 52-65).

www.irma-international.org/article/research-on-the-uniqueness-and-characteristic-development-of-university-library-cultural-services/240798

The Collection and Service Optimization of China's Academic Library ILL Based on Bipartite Matching: A Case Study of Soochow University

Yue Ma, Jingxian Han and Zhuozhuo Li (2020). *International Journal of Library and Information Services* (pp. 1-16).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-collection-and-service-optimization-of-chinas-academic-library-ill-based-on-bipartite-matching/253101

Planning for a Disaster: Effective Emergency Management in the 21st Century

Carmen Cowick and Jeff Cowick (2016). *Handbook of Research on Disaster Management and Contingency Planning in Modern Libraries* (pp. 49-69).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/planning-for-a-disaster/135185

Implementing Makerspace in Nigerian School Libraries: Issues and Challenges

Alice A. Bamigbola (2022). *Handbook of Research on Emerging Trends and Technologies in Librarianship* (pp. 271-280).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/implementing-makerspace-in-nigerian-school-libraries/295201

Open-Source Software Use in Libraries in Developing Countries

Josiline Phiri Chigwada (2022). *Technological Advancements in Library Service Innovation* (pp. 215-236).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/open-source-software-use-in-libraries-in-developing-countries/296919