APPRAISAL OF INFORMATION LITERACY IN FESTUS AGHAGBO NWAKO LIBRARY

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Abstract

Satisfying the need of the information user in a university library is not an easy task. This is because all the teaching, learning and research going on in the university revolve around the library collection. It then becomes necessary that librarians in the present age should identify the competences a user requires to navigate the information world. Librarians should be proactive in developing strategies that will enhance proper utilization of information for the end user. This is very crucial because the quantum of information occasioned by information technology such as the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) places the information user at a cross road. Where the librarian does not help, he will resort to self help. When he decides to help himself, he may bypass the library in his quest for information. Therefore, the need to ensure that the quality of information provided to the user emanated from reliable sources, the library should provide the enabling academic environment that will equip information seekers with abilities needed to be able to filter the good from the bad. This is where information literacy comes to mind. Information literacy is the ability to recognize the extent and nature of information needs, locate, evaluate and effectively use the needed information. This paper discussed the practice of information literacy in Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library. It highlighted the challenges of the Department as well as strategies that can be adopted to move the Department forward.

Keywords: ***Information Literacy Skills, Computer Literacy, Tool Literacy, Visual Literacy, FANL.***

Introduction

Finding information for ourselves is a resounding trait in this information age. This is an age in which the society no longer depends solely on librarians for their information needs but interfaces directly with the information carriers. Unfortunately this development has come with its own challenges. Be that as it may, the society is not finding it easy to keep pace with the necessary skills and expertise needed to find, utilize and evaluate information. Experience has shown that many information seekers after fruitless search for required information out of the deluge of available information end up becoming more confused and frustrated than when they started the search. This is usually the case as Henri & Bonanno cited in Birds & Desleby (2003) observed.

Satisfying the need of the information user in a university library is not an easy task. The university library according to Anyaegbu (2016) is the academic nerve center of the institution because all the teaching, learning and research going on in the university revolve around the library collection. To a large extent, the quality of a university education can be measured by the services provided by the library because of its unique position in the overall university academic programme. It then becomes necessary that librarians in the present age should identify the competences a user requires to navigate the information world. Librarians should be proactive in developing strategies that will enhance proper utilization of information for the end user. This is very crucial

because the quantum of information occasioned by information technology such as the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) places the information user at a cross road. Where the librarian does not help, he will resort to self help. When he decides to help himself, he may bypass the library in his quest for information.

Experience has shown that users are more likely to go to the Internet than come to the library for their information need as Ross and Sennyey (2008) observed. Such information seekers do not mind whether the information they find on the Net via search engines or social networking sites is correct or reliable (Thanuskodi, 2010). Librarians should not fold their hands and watch the information seekers swim in the ocean of confusion. Library and information science profession is under threat as there are other information providers. As information professionals, librarians are better placed to source and provide the information user the required information. Therefore, the need to ensure that the quality of information provided to the user emanated from reliable sources, the library should provide the enabling academic environment that will equip information seekers with abilities needed to be able to filter the good from the bad. This is where information literacy comes to mind.

Information literacy according to Chevlliotte (2010) is still a complex and evolving concept and has many articles, books and conferences to its credit. Although new and evolving, Chevlliotte rightly observed that information literacy has gained wide recognition and acceptance in the field of library and information science. According to Plastterburgh (2014) information literacy is the ability to recognize the extent and nature of information needs, locate, evaluate and effectively use the needed information. ALA (2016) comprehensively defined information literacy as the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating a new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning. These abilities were very well articulated in the SCONUL seven pillars thus:

- The ability to recognize a need for information
- The ability to distinguish way in which the information gap may be addressed
- The ability to construct strategies for locating information
- The ability to locate and access information
- The ability to compare and evaluate information obtained from different sources
- The ability to organize, apply, and communicate information to others in appropriate ways
- The ability to synthesize and build upon existing information contributing to the creation of new knowledge.

Information literacy can simply be described in these three words: the know, the where and the how. This entails the ability to know when information is

needed, where to go for the information, how to search for it, ability to use it and be able to evaluate if the need has been satisfied. Information literacy is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the information society and according to Shrestha (2008) encompasses computer literacy, tool literacy, visual literacy, media literacy, library literacy and Network literacy.

Computer Literacy: Computer literacy refers to the knowledge and ability to use computers and related technology efficiently. It entails range of skills covering levels from elementary use to programming and advanced problem solving.

Tool Literacy: Tool literacy is the ability to understand and practically and conceptually use current technology effectively.

Visual Literacy: This according to Shrestha (2008) refers to facial expressions, body language, drawing, painting, sculpture, hand sign, street signs, international symbols, layout of the pictures and words in a textbook, the clarity of type fronts, computer images, students produced pictures and many more.

Media Literacy: Those competences that enable people to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a wide variety of media modes, genres and formats.

Library Literacy: This refers to knowledge of the services available through a library, an understanding of array of resources available, knowledge of how information is organized and understanding the best means of finding it.

Network Literacy: This refers to the basic knowledge and skills required for citizens to participate in the networked society.

Information Literacy in Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library

Information Literacy Department of Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library is a child born out of necessity. A meeting between the present university librarian (Prof Obiora Nwosu) and immediate past chairman of the 7th Governing Council of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Air Marshal Larry Koinyan gave birth to the creation of the Information Literacy Department of Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library. The Council Chairman during the meeting lamented the lack of literacy skills he observed among most students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University he has interacted with. He requested the University Librarian to create a department that will teach these students the basic skills they need to navigate the information world before leaving the university. Thus that meeting gave birth to the establishment of Information Literacy Department of Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library. According to Onwuka (2016), the Information Literacy Department of Festus Aghagbo Nwako is a department that handles training for library use and other marketing programmes. The department has gone beyond providing training on library use to articulate programmes that will help users not just to acquire skills on the use of library but also equip them with all the abilities that will enable them to navigate the information world irrespective of where the

information is located. To achieve this, the Information Literacy Department of Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library has drawn up some set of objectives to achieve its goals.

Mission Statement of the Department

To provide information literacy instruction and training based on the needs of students, staff and other members of University community aimed at promoting effective use of information resources and beyond.

Objective of the Department

To utilize various teaching strategies and methods to meet the individual differences in learning

To present instruction in formal setting through lectures and demonstrations to respond to the total educational process of the academic community

To provide an environment for learning Internet surfing skills

To promote life-long learning by the teaching of learning and teaching skills

Specific Objectives of the Information Literacy Department are as follows

To help:

Users understand the role, value, and power of information in this information age

Users understand organizational structure of Festus Aghagbo Library

Users understand the functions of the different departments of the library

Users understand different sources of Information

Users understand how the information resources in Festus Aghagbo Nwako library are classified and arranged on the shelves

Users understand information Storage and Retrieval devices in the library

Users understand how to use the Library

To Teach:

Users to understand that information sources may be grouped in a variety of ways

Users to know and appreciate the differences between the level of sources available (primary, secondary, etc)

Users to understands how information is structured

Users how to distinguish between various treatment of a subject

Users to become aware of the different means by which information may be delivered(orally, paper, electronically)

Users to understand how to use the catalogue

To teach:

Users how to access information in the database

Users how to use the online public access catalogue

Users how to surf the web using different search engines

Users how to access, and upload information on the departmental social media page

Strategies to evaluate whether the library User:

Can evaluate the relevance of the information retrieved

Can identify relevant factors which may constrain their retrieval of information

Can recognize the challenges that no one source is comprehensive

Can evaluate the quality and relevance of an information source

Having looked at the above specific objectives, one would want to know how the department intends to achieve them. Programme has been developed geared towards achieving that purpose.

Programmes of the Information Literacy Department

The programme is expected to help users acquire the desired skills needed to navigate the information world. The programmes are as follows:

Generate questionnaire that will be sent to faculties and departments to ascertain the information needs of staff and students as this will help in knowing what to provide for them and how.

Collaborate with faculties and departments to give students assignments that must be carried out in the library from the new academic session.

Organize workshops, classes, and online tutorials for students

Collaborate with faculties and department to organize library tour; examination will be conducted at the end of such tours.

Collaborate with the library school to organize debate that will center on library and other information providers in this information age.

Organize a FANL library week towards the first quarter of 2018 aimed at showcasing the services of the library.

Organize an in-house debate for the present IT students before September to serve as pilot study

Use of social media networking tools to reach out to the university community

Organize programmes for the primary and secondary pupils at the University Demonstration School.

Make a concerted effort to see that the new manual on *Use of Library and information Literacy* is adopted for the teaching of GST 121 and GST 122 in the university.

To provide an organigram in a diagramatic representation at the entrance of the library to direct users to various departments/locations where they could access and use information.

Services offered by the Department of Information Literacy so far

- The Department which is collaborative in nature has been able with the help of other amiable heads of Department of the Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library within the short time of its existence produced a full text on the use

of library titled "Use of Library and Information Literacy for Higher education" for the teaching of GST 101 and 102 and presently awaiting University curriculum committee approval.

- The Department has trained one hundred and twenty final year students of Mass Communication Department on the use of library.
- The Department has also trained 30 students of Library and Information Science students of Anambra State University, Uli on the use of library and search strategies
- Presently, 42 students from 5 universities which include: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, ESUT, Madonna and College of education Nsugbe are undergoing a six months industrial training in the Library.

The porters unit of the department is the first point of call for anyone that comes to the library. Service rendered at the unit includes:

- Custody of student bags. There is a rack where users keep their bags. Two tallies are issued to them. One is kept inside the owner's bag while the user goes inside the library with the other one. The two tallies must be presented to the porters before the owner is allowed to carry his bag.
- Non users to be admitted into the library, such a one must have registered with the library and have a library ID card or receipt to show proof of registration.
- Users from other institutions must show a letter of introduction from his or her school.
- Users are checked on their way out of the library to guide against theft and mutilation of library materials

Challenges of the Department

- Lack of fund to carry on with the progammes of the Department
- The department do not have enough staff both for training and attending to library users at the porters stand
- Lack of working materials such as office furniture, no computers, projector. The department is yet to be equipped for the services it intends to render.
- Lack of ICT infrastructure
- Lack of steady power supply for effective service
- The stack for keeping students/staff bags is not enough.
- Attitude of library staff makes it impossible for the porters to work at full capacity
- Attitude of departmental staff towards the IT students from the departments so far visited is discouraging.
- No CCTV camera to boost security of library resources

Strategies For Enhanced Service Provision

- The library should pressurize the university

management to approve that *Library and Information literacy for Higher Education* should be used to teach GSS 101 AND 102. The text was carefully designed for that purpose.

- The Department is in dire need of take off grant and working materials.
- Providing the department with ICT infrastructural facilities
- Provision of adequate stack with key.
- Provision of adequate staff that will help to run the services of the department
- Provision of standby generator and inverter

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