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2013

## User Education and Information Handling Skills as Determinants of Information Resources Use among Undergraduate Students of the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

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OKIKI, Olatokunbo C., "User Education and Information Handling Skills as Determinants of Information Resources Use among Undergraduate Students of the University of Lagos, Nigeria." (2013). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 993.

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**USER EDUCATION AND INFORMATION HANDLING SKILLS AS  
DETERMINANTS OF INFORMATION RESOURCES USE AMONG  
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, NIGERIA.**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*This study set out to find out the impact of user education and information literacy handling on information resources use among undergraduate students at the University of Lagos as it relate to use of information resources in library. Two hundred and two questionnaires were randomly distributed to library users. The data gathered were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The result revealed that different responses were given on their mode of skill acquisition ranging from program organized by librarian, trail and error, friends etc.; and the information resources used vary from individual respondents. The majority of the respondents indicated that user education and information handling skills have impacted greatly on their use of information resources. From the findings, it could be concluded that user education and information handling skills should be inculcated into the school curriculum. Also, Libraries must focus on access, not ownership, but more emphasis on information delivery.*

**Keywords:** Information handling, information resources, Skill acquisition, undergraduate.

## **Introduction**

Library is a storehouse of information where information resources in whatever formats are stocked for research activities. The central purpose of establishing university library is to support teaching, learning, research and extension services. The university library sources, acquires, processes and make available information resources to achieving this task. University libraries ensure that the appropriate information resources are selected based on acquisition policy of the institution, acquired and processed. According to Loho (1992), it is expected of library personnel to interact with the users to find out what they need or want to know, and to provide them with the relevant information needed. He further emphasised that for effective use of the library and its materials, users can be alerted of the information available in the library by operating a number of current awareness services.

The major objective of the university library as espoused by Aina (2002) is to provide materials and services that will now and in the future best contribute to the fulfillment of the objectives of the university. It is the duty of the library to identify the information needs of its users. Availability of information resources means ensuring their presence in libraries for immediate use (Aguolu and Aguolu 2002). With the information overload that permeate our society, students' ability to assess information by sorting out subjective, biased, or even false information has become a key issue in training people to become smart information consumers (Salomon, 2000).

The effective use of information and information resources provides opportunities for people to work both individually and collaboratively, to consider which information resources to be used, the knowledge and skills of information retrieval, organization and dissemination are required. Information handling skills have become increasingly important to students due to the volume of information resources which is now produced and disseminated every day; hence students need to be equipped with the skills to locate access, evaluate, and act on information received.

For more effective use of the available information resources in the library, it is recommended that user' education and orientation on CD-ROM searching and other related information resources should be taken seriously (Oduwole and Sowole, 2006). According to Rader (2002) information literacy developments has been formal education, particularly in tertiary institutions as this has to do with integrating and embedding the concept in curricula and

the collaboration of librarians with other staff, particularly lecturer. One significant recent trend is the move to online delivery of information literacy education, especially through course management systems or virtual learning environments (Wilson 2001, Johnston & Webber 2003).

Information gathering could be a challenging and an arduous task to the undergraduate students in tertiary institutions because Web page information, for instance is reliable or not. A critical point about using the Internet is that individuals posting information aren't required to pass through traditional editorial constraints or undergo any kind of fact-checking required in conventional published print media (Webber and Johnston 2004). Beside the problem of facilities in the way students organized their own learning, how they source for academic information needed for them to excel. The higher the students go in the academic ladder, the more academic information they required to tackle their various challenges. Users education is essential to students because it allow them acquire the needed skills to know when information is needed and where to locate it effectively and efficiently.

Although there is an assumption that students are able to use information resources, the reality is that they vary in usage ability. In using the educational resources, students have varied skills in locating and evaluating information which impedes its effective use. From the background therefore, this paper seeks to investigate user education and information handling skills as determinants of effective use of information resources among undergraduate of the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

## **Literature review**

Information handling technique is the adoption of appropriate information (re)sources to obtain, through whatever channel or medium, information well fitted to information needs, together with critical awareness of the importance of wise and ethical use of information in society. Information literacy can be summarized in different categories. Boekhorst (2003) finds that all definitions and descriptions of information literacy presented over the years can be summarized in three concepts:: Information literacy refers to the competence to use ICT to retrieve and disseminate information. The information (re)sources concept: information literacy refers to the competence to find and use information independently or with the aid of intermediaries.

Ojedokun and Lumade (2005) describe information literacy as the ability to locate, evaluate, manage and use information from a range of sources not only for problem solving but also for decision making and research. Information literacy is much broader than the acquisition of traditional information skills. This includes how to use a catalogue, how to locate a book on the shelves and how to access an electronic databases. Warschauer (2004) recognises information literacy as part of the electronic literacy spectrum, which includes computer literacy – ability to operate a computer.

The need for information skills and proficiencies are intensified by the complexity, the rapid changing and the impact of the electronic environment. The variety of information resources has increased; hence students are exposed to more potential information resources. This often leads to information overload and/or anxiety and the propensity for students to use Internet search engines as the sole source for research with the coinciding temptation to cut and paste from sites encouraging plagiarism and academic dishonesty (Georges, 2004 and Orr, Appleton & Walling, 2001). It is expected of today's students to organize and deliver information to an individual user's desktop.

According to Ali (2005), a sizeable number of users (almost 60%) are facing numerous problems while using electronic information resources, such as lack of knowledge about the resources, lack of trained staff and inadequate terminals..Similarly, Wills (1990) also concur to these problems when he identified insufficient number of terminals available for use despite high demand and inadequate electricity supply; lack of information retrieval skills for exploiting electronic resources, thus making the level of usage of resources by students very low. In his study, he found that 57% of students sampled could not use a computer, that the use of database was poor, due to lack of awareness, lack of access to computers, insufficient training and the high cost of provision.

The changing pattern of education has also increased the necessity and the urgency for user education and information literacy. The use of on-line information retrieval system or electronic information resources requires a good training on the part of the users. With increase of databases in various disciplines, the needs for user training have become evident (Jain 2006). Studies have shown that library user education and information literacy can have a positive influence on the quality of user's information searching and education (Bainton, 2001). User

education and information literacy aims to equip users with the needed skills to enable them to make use of libraries and their resources in a user-friendly manner.

Okello-Obura and Magara (2008) report in their study that the majority of their respondents learnt to access electronic resources and they acquired database search skills through self-taught. However, Bates (1979) advises that information providers should assist users in their searches by suggesting or teaching strategies that they could use when their search strategies do not produce the desired results. In order to effectively retrieve information, users should be taught to value and implement information retrieval skills effectively, as this will have an effect on how they find and use information, concepts and ideas for their tasks.

User education often includes library orientation, induction and information skills training. Hence, it is the duty of the practitioners in the field of library and information science to:

- Use wide variety of methods to help users in information skills through lectures, practical 'hands-on' sessions, workbooks, printed guides, videos, and demonstrations;
- Adopt approaches to user education which can reach non-traditional students such as part-time and distance learners through information technology support via computer mediated communication;
- Use the web for teaching through linking to ready-made training packages or developing in-house products;
- Use computer-assisted learning (CAL) and hypertext in creating flexible learning packages for developing web library guides (Rhodes, Helen and Chelin 2000).

A number of studies have concluded that library user education and information literacy can have a positive impact on the quality of user's information searching and education (Kamba, 2009). Tiefel, (1995) exhibited that there is a significant relationship between library user education and student achievement. Additionally, Prorak (1994) observed that user education on music students, and found a significant relationship between user education and student achievement. In summary, library user education and information literacy can encompass a broad range of activities. It is widely recognized that the ability to use information effectively is extremely important in today's society.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The following specific objectives guided the study:

1. examine strategies adopted by students to acquire basic information literacy skills.
2. find out the importance of user education and information literacy on the use of information resource.
3. determine how regular students attend information literacy programs.
4. examine the impact of user education and information literacy handling skills on information resources.
5. find out how students evaluate information sources and materials.

## **Research Questions**

1. What strategies are adopted by students to acquire basic information literacy skills?
2. How regular do students attend information literacy programs?
3. What is the importance of user education and information handling skills on the use of information resource?
4. What are the impact of user education and information literacy handling on information resources among undergraduate students?
5. How do students evaluate information sources and materials?

## **Methodology**

A descriptive survey design was adopted in this study. The study population comprised of undergraduate students of university of Lagos who used the library during the last year academic session (2010/2011) academic session. A total of 262 students were randomly selected. The desk officers were trained in administering a self-developed questionnaire on them. While administering the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they had earlier filled the instrument so as to forestall duplication. Out of this number, 243 responded giving a response rate of 82 percent. The reliability coefficient of the instrument used was ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ) based on the Cronbach alpha method. Data analysis was simple descriptive statistics.

## **Results of the Study**

In this research, 262 copies of questionnaire were distributed among the participants but only 243 (82%) questionnaire were returned. Among these respondents 59.7% were male and only 40.3% were female as indicated in table 1.

**Table 1: Gender**

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	145	59.7
Female	98	40.3
Total	243	100

**What strategies are adopted by students to acquire basic information literacy skills?**

The result shows that majority of the respondents which constitute 39% acquired basic information literacy programs in the library staff. Also, 32% of the respondents acquired basic information handling skills through trail and error, while 24% acquired their skills through friends and course mate. The result also shown that respondents use information mostly for academic, education and training activities which constitute 37% and 35.5% respectively while, 12% use information for social activities and 5% of the respondent use information for health purpose. See Table 2:

**Table 2.Strategies for acquisition of information handling skills?**

Statement	Parameter	Count	%
<b>How do you acquire basic information literacy skills?</b>	Friends/ Course Mate	72	24
	Information Literacy Programs in the library	115	39
	Trail and error	96	32
	No response	13	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>What activities do you need information for?</b>	Academic Activities	163	37
	Health Education	23	5
	Economic Activities	20	5
	Social Activities	54	12
	Educational and Training Activities	158	35.5
	All activities	2	0.5
	No Response	23	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100</b>

**How regular do students attend information literacy programs?**

The result shows that 83% of the respondents attended course on finding and using information, while 10% of the respondents attended course on finding and using information occasionally and only 7% of the respondent never attended programs on finding and using

information .The result further shows that 44% of the respondents attended programs on ICT training occasionally compare to 53% of the respondents who attended programs on e-Resources/ICT training often. While 3% of the respondents never attended. On library orientation, 64.5% of the respondents responded very often, while 31 % of the respondents attend occasionally. On the other hand, 71% of the respondents indicated that they attend courses on information literacy courses often while 17% of the respondents never attended information literacy courses. Respondents who attend programs on online public catalogue very often accounted for 44%. This is revealed the Table 3 below:

**Table 3: frequency of programs/classes on these information handling skills?**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Finding and using information</i>	Very Often	127	52
	Often	75	31
	Occasionally	25	10
	Never	16	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>ICT Training</i>	Very Often	33	14
	Often	96	39
	Occasionally	106	44
	Never	8	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Library Orientation</i>	Very Often	56	23
	Often	101	41.5
	Occasionally	75	31
	Never	11	4.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Information literacy courses</i>	Very Often	96	40
	Often	75	31
	Occasionally	30	12
	Never	42	17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Online public catalogue usage</i>	Very Often	55	23
	Often	50	21
	Occasionally	25	10
	Never	113	46
	<b>Total</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Using Search engine</i>	Very Often	111	46
	Often	87	36
	Occasionally	34	14
	Never	11	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100</b>

**What is the importance of user education and information handling skills on the use of information resource?**

The result revealed that, 57% male and 58% of female students respectively thought that the impact of user education and information handling skills on the use information resource was very much important. The result revealed further that 29% of both sex shows that respondents' user education is somehow important. On the other hand 14% of male and 13% of female students indicated that user education and information handling skills on the use information resource was not important. A summary of the result is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: importance of user education and information handling skills on the use of information resource**

Users	Very Much Important	Somehow Important	Not Important
Male	82(57%)	41(29%)	20(14%)
Female	57(58%)	28(29%)	13(13%)

**What are the impact of user education and information literacy handling on information resources among undergraduate students?**

The result revealed that 79% of the respondent indicated that user education and information handling skills will have a great impact on their use of information resources while, 69% agreed that user education and information handling skills will enhance their searching skills. In addition, the result show further that 64% of the respondents could locate as well as applying critical thinking to information resources use in the library. Finally, 63% the respondents agreed that user education and information handling skills programs had provided them with basic, intermediate and advanced guidance in the use of information resources and library use. See Table 5 for more detail

**Table 5. Impact of user education and information handling skills on information resources.**

Impact	Level				
	Strongly Agree	Undecided	Not Agree	Strongly disagree	Total
User education and information handling skills will enhance my searching ability.	173 (69%)	42 (18%)	22 (9%)	6 (4%)	243
User education and information handling skills can make me to locate information resources easily.	152(63%)	49( 21%)	21 (9%)	21 (9%)	243
User education and information handling skills will lead to the use of new electronic formats, and applying critical thinking to information.	190(79%)	23 (10%)	19 (8%)	11 (5%)	243
User education and information handling skills can enable me to become more independent in information search and use	206(55%)	6 (3%)	26 (11%)	6 (3%)	243
User education and information literacy can provide me with basic, intermediate, and advanced guidance in the use of the information resources and library use.	151 (63%)	12 36%)	7 (3%)	3(2%)	243

### **How do students evaluate information sources and materials?**

The result on how students evaluate their source of information revealed that almost half 48% of the respondents expressed that they evaluate information materials and sources on the basis of currency very often, followed by 30% of the respondents that evaluate information materials and sources on the basis of currency often. Another 10% of the respondents occasionally evaluate information sources and materials on the basis of currency and 12% of the respondents never evaluate information on the basis of currency. Relevance of information material and source is very often use by 50% of the respondents to evaluate information sources and materials followed by 38% of the respondent who evaluate information sources and materials often using relevance. More so, 5% and 7% of the respondents occasionally and never evaluate information sources and materials on the basis of relevance respectively.

Accuracy of information materials and sources is often used by more than half of the respondents 48% while, 22% of the respondent use accuracy of information sources and materials very often to evaluate the sources and materials. Furthermore, 20% of the respondents

occasionally evaluate information sources and materials using accuracy while only 10% of the respondents never use accuracy as means for evaluating materials. Authority of authors is very often use by 65% of the respondents followed by 26% of the respondents who use authority of author very often. In addition, 6% of the respondents occasionally lastly, 3% of the respondents never use authority of the author evaluate materials and sources. A summary of the result is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: On Evaluation of information and sources**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Currency</b>	Very Often	117	48
	Often	74	30
	Occasionally	24	10
	Never	28	12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Relevance</b>	Very Often	122	50
	Often	92	38
	Occasionally	13	5
	Never	16	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Accuracy</b>	Very Often	52	22
	Often	118	48
	Occasionally	48	20
	Never	25	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Authority</b>	Very Often	159	65
	Often	64	26
	Occasionally	14	6
	Never	7	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Discussion of Findings**

Based on the stated research questions drawn it was observed in the study that students acquired basic information literacy skills through the attendance to information literacy programs on use information resources. This finding slightly differ from the study carried out by Library Assessment conference in the USA (2006) the study revealed that students acquired information

handling skills majorly through self taught and trial by error.. The study also revealed that student in the University of Lagos attended orientation programs on finding and using information in order to get acquainted with relevant information resources. This is agreement with the position of Adeleke (2005) who asserted that if the library is to contribute to the advancement of knowledge, it must not only provide the resources but also ensure effective use of the resources by its clientele. Okiy (2000), in support of this claim, posited that for the library to perform its role adequately, its resources must be effectively utilized.

The finding shows that majority of the respondents which constitute 39% acquired basic information literacy programs in the library staff. This result contradict the position of Ojedokun and Lumande (2005) who asserted that, information literacy skills acquisition has not been accorded its position in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The finding also revealed that 32% of the respondents acquired their information handling skills through trail by error. This finding aligns with Okello-Obura and Magara (2008), who reported that the majority of their respondents at Makerere University in Uganda learnt to access electronic resources and acquired database search skills through trial and error and self-taught.

The finding revealed that 79% of the respondent indicated that user education and information handling skills will have a great impact on their use of information resources. Similarly, 69% agreed that user education and information handling skills will enhance their searching skills. These findings are in agreement with Tiefel, (1995) that there is a significant relationship between library user education and use of library resources as it affects student achievement. Additionally, Prorak (1994) submitted that user education on music students, and found a significant relationship between user education and student achievement.

Finally, the finding on evaluation of information sources revealed that the respondents evaluate information materials and sources on the basis of currency, accuracy and relevance in order to determine or carry out independent use of library resources. This finding aligned with study of Dafiaghor (2012) in which he argued that effective information retrieval skills can be demonstrated by: the ability to evaluate various bibliographic search strategies; the ability to select and justify the appropriate search techniques in order to carry out independent research, and the ability to critically evaluate search results.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

User education and information handling skills have become increasingly important due to avalanche volume of information resources that permeate our society. Users of the information resources need to be fully equipped with the skills to locate, access, evaluate and use effectively all the available information resources. In libraries. User education and information handling skills aim to equip users with the needed skills to enable them to make use of libraries and their resources in a user-friendly manner. Therefore, it is the responsibility of librarian in ensuring proper user education and information handling techniques libraries.

Based on the findings from the study, it could be concluded that user education and information handling skills need to be inculcated early into the school curriculum,. In addition, libraries must focus on access, not ownership, with more emphasis on information delivery. Libraries should attach more importance to locating and obtaining information and less to where the information is housed. This can only be achieved through the programme of user education and information literacy. Librarians should provide user education and information handling skills program to faculty members, in a bid that this will be communicated to their students.

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