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October 2023

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MOUSTAPHA, Abdrahman Atanda, "Tangible Impact of Literacy in Libraries and Information Undergraduate Academic Performance Skills Students at Kwara State University, Nigeria" (2023). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 7916.

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# **The Tangible Impact of Literacy in Libraries and Information Undergraduate Academic Performance Skills Students at Kwara State University, Nigeria**

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## ***Abstract***

***PURPOSE:*** *The paper examined the effect of library skills and literacy on the academic performance of undergraduate students at Kwara State University, Nigeria.*

***DESIGN/METHODOLOGY:*** *A descriptive survey method and random sampling techniques were used with 150 randomly selected students for the research. A self-designed questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the respondents, and a simple percentage ratio was adapted for data analysis.*

***Findings:*** The result shows that most of the students do not have access to literacy facilities. It reveals a lack of application skills by the majority but shows the positive impact of information literacy on students' academic performance. The results show that 70% of the undergraduate students used their Smartphone's, while 30% did not use smart phones as a kind of information literacy facility for their academic performance. 93% used the Internet as the highest level of access for reading and writing skills, more than any other access window available. The results also showed that 70% said that information literacy skills can help beat the time, while 30% said no. Again, 74% said frequent power outages led to current literacy challenges.

***Authenticity and Value:*** It is recommended, among other things, that undergraduates register formally with the main library for better academic learning and achievement; The management of the university shall offer a compulsory and general course of study on information literacy to enable prospective graduates to acquire reading and writing skills for research, projects, and further studies; Frequent capacity building and training in information literacy skills should be organized for staff, undergraduates, and postgraduate students. Librarians must devise means of reaching out to students in order to enhance the research process, maximize students' academic performance, and so on.

***Keywords:*** *Library, Information, Literacy skills, Academic Performance, Kwara State University, Nigeria.*

***Paper type:*** *Empirical research*

## **Background to the Study**

The availability and content of library resources and services in a student's immediate surroundings might influence how well they perform academically. This is where library and information practitioners come in. They generate, organize, and transmit to users the knowledge and tools for this purpose. Libraries are defined as an organized collection of books and audiovisual materials, published and unpublished, with the help of personnel who are able to provide and interpret these materials as required to meet the informational research, educational, and entertainment needs of their users. It was established as an intellectual center to systematically collect, organize, preserve, and disseminate knowledge and information. The provision of library services is of paramount importance, from primary schools to higher education institutions and beyond. The library is essential to any educational development. It inculcates in people a love of reading for its own sake very early in life and develops in them a spirit of inquiry and self-development through reading (Bruce, 2017). Information literacy is the basis for lifelong learning, according to the Association for College and Research Libraries' (ACRL's) 2017 Information Literacy Competency Standards. All learning and disciplines share it, environments and all levels of education. It enables learners to master the content of their investigations, become more self-directed, and have more control over their own learning. Literacy is the ability to acquire knowledge through learning, usually in an educational setting. This confirms Bailey's (2007) declaration that "literacy is not an innate human characteristic but rather an ability that is learned, often in schools." Although education is critical to literacy flourishing, it is not enough. Achieving a modern and educated society is unthinkable without libraries, which, according to Wilson (2001), are "uniquely positioned to promote literacy". Therefore, the library is a real tool for promoting universal literacy. As noted by Bruce (2017),

libraries have undergone dramatic change in recent years, which will continue into the future. As libraries have changed, so has the role of the librarian. By supplying students with knowledge through publicly rated computing systems, librarians have increased the scope of their responsibilities.. Over the centuries, libraries have been useful institutions for studying and investigating all kinds of problems. It has always been a gathering point for students and researchers who wanted to delve into in-depth research and discoveries on various topics. This is why the United States and the British government place great importance on libraries as a critical factor in educational and national development. Despite the indispensable role of libraries in educational and national development, governments, educational organizations, and institutions in developing nations are constantly paying lip service to their impact. They demand development, yet the real tool to achieve this is neglected, especially in the academic performance of the students, especially at Kwara State University, Nigeria. Thus, the culture of bad reading and low standards in education persist.

## **Relevant literature review**

Information literacy plays a very vital role in the academic performance of students, especially in higher educational institutions. Bailey (2007) evaluated the effect of four information literacy workshops conducted among nursing diploma students prior to enrollment at Northumbria University, UK, and found that all students improved their academic scores on their next assignment as well as increased their levels of confidence and information literacy. Magoi (2014) reports that research reveals that reading scores for students who focus on improving their library programs are, on average, eight to twenty-one percent higher than comparable schools with no such development. The student generally improves their competence and approaches the task positively through the effect of information literacy skills, which in turn contribute to their behavior, delivery, and submission of their assignments in a timely manner as well as improving their academic performance. Information literacy enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and have more control over their own learning (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2000). A change in thinking in university teaching contributed to the growth of bibliographic education in information literacy. According to Breivik (2017), echoing topics explored in *Information Literacy around the World*, future teaching roles for academic librarians are considered to be:

- The new paradigm of higher education reflects the need to focus on learning rather than teaching.
- The new emphasis on learning in higher education gives importance to learning and
- That in this new environment, librarians have new opportunities to play a strong and dynamic role in the collaborative design and development of contexts for learning strategies.

Raspa (2015) noted that "we have reached a point where neither librarians nor teaching staff can adequately teach the research process in isolation, as it requires both teachers and librarians to teach students to develop appropriate research skills". This indicates a more important role for the library, which has been impacted by the use of electronic information today in libraries. Bruce (2017) notes that globalization, information, and computer technology have inexorably changed the ways we read, write, learn, and research. Today, we know that standard practices from the past are not enough because they are of little help with the complexities of contemporary life or with informational facts. This means that comprehension requires a number of competencies, both in terms of the ability to analyze, synthesize, and present information in multiple contexts for different audiences. The relationship between teaching and library resources depends on the personal relationship between faculty and librarians, and Critical Mass is growing as an "information superhighway" that can have a significant impact on how students learn.

Libraries have been recognized as having an edge in the new world of information because of their long experience in organizing and classifying electronic information systems and because of their expertise in using and teaching databases. In the expanding world of information, according to the College Association and Research Library (2017), the ability to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to identify, evaluate, and use information needed effectively" has been recognized as essential to academic success. As documented by Whitehead & Quinlan (2002) and Julien & Boon (2004), information literacy in Canada, particularly in higher education, remains largely rooted in the tradition of bibliographic education. However, many universities, such as the University of Alberta and Winnipeg, are transitioning to newer IL-based models, but these efforts often represent the work of individual

institutions and librarians. The analysis of the literature points to some of the key issues that characterize the change from traditional bibliographic education (BI) to an effective information literacy (IL) program. The English language program must:

Follow a mode of inquiry-based and student-centered learning.

- To have an immediate objective of students achieving academic success with a long-term objective of providing lifelong learning that
- Caters to the needs of different learner backgrounds as well as learning abilities.
- Include learning objectives that introduce learners to various experiences in the electronic environment.

The librarian must:

- Be an active collaborator and participant, working as a partner with faculty members at the curriculum design level;
- Take a proactive and dynamic role in the teaching process by seeking collaborative opportunities with faculty to design and develop contexts for learning strategies, leading to a stronger and more formal teaching role.

The IL coordinator should:

- Work with colleagues in the library in an advisory role;
- Seek to obtain administrative support for the teaching role of librarians by building alliances within the library and marketing the educational role of the library on campus.
- Collaborate with academic stakeholders to achieve success in applying IL across campus.



The success of any integrated learning program, though, depends on how well librarians are willing to work with their changing role "from passive support of their teaching functions to active collaboration and participation in them" through a program of professional development. Library users are instructed on how to interpret the information and use it for academic and productive activities. Information literacy enables students to develop skills that help them become active and effective learners. Bruce (2017) asserted that the information literacy function of libraries endows the user with the ability to effectively locate, manage, and use information for a range of purposes. Thus, it is an important skill that allows people to participate in effective decision-making, problem-solving, and research. It also enables them to take responsibility for continuous learning in areas of personal or professional interest. User education has grown significantly over recent years, and information literacy has become an issue in many academic libraries. Various approaches have been used to develop information literacy among students. For example:

- Develop a guide for students to use or evaluate resources.
- Delivering class sessions;
- Developing stand-alone courses;
- Creating a course website to give students a guided tour of the web search
- Develop a task where students work on a research strategy appropriate to the problem statement.
- Assisting students in preparing their literature reviews
- Develop online lessons or incorporate information literacy into the curriculum.

Bruce and Lampson (2012) note that, although some progress has been made over the past decade, library and information professionals still report that universal information literacy is a distant, if not declining, goal, while Johnston and Weber (2016) say that even in the United States, "While much attention has been paid to information literacy by US policymakers, librarians, and academics, the results are still relatively narrow, giving the possibility of a superficial guide to the nature of the information literacy curriculum in higher education" (Firkus, 2004).

### **Research questions**

The paper mainly seeks to show the role of libraries as essential institutions for the acquisition of reading and writing skills and the academic performance of undergraduate students, as well as the qualitative questions used in the research questions posed. Education and national development other specific goals include:

- What types of information literacy facilities do students use?
- What is the level of students' access to reading and writing skills?
- In what ways have you influenced libraries through information literacy?
- What are the challenges facing access to informatics knowledge?

## Methodology

A descriptive survey was used as the study included collecting data about the population sample that was organized, tabulated, described, and described the study variables (Akinsola & Agunleye, 2004). Students at Kwara State University (KWASU) made up the population of this study, and 150 of them were purposefully and randomly chosen via a questionnaire. The tool consisted of responses to demographic and yes/no information.

**Table 1: Gender Distribution**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	85	57%
Female	65	43%
Total	150	100%

Table 1: Gender distribution results shows that 85(57%) respondents are male while 65(43%) are female students. Based on the analysis showed on the table, there are more female respondents than males.

**Table 2: Level of Undergraduate Respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
400L	55	37%
300L	40	27%
200L	34	23%
100L	21	14%
Total	150	100 %

The level of undergraduate students dominated the respondents showed 55(37%) are 400L respondent, 40(27%) are 300L respondents, 34(23%) are 200L respondents while 21(14%) are 100L. From this analysis we deduct that the 400 levels students responded more than other levels. Their high response is seen to be as a result of their intense academic activities in which at this level, they rigorously embark on research works (Table 2). **Research Question 1:** What are the types of Information Literacy Facility Use?

**Table3: Showing the Type of Information Literacy Facility Used by UG Students**

Items	Responses	Percentage (%)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
Physical Resources		98 (65)	52 (35)
Online Resources/OPAC/OER		93 (62)	57 (38)
Electronic Media		45 (30)	105 (70)
Personal Computer		60 (40)	90 (60)
Smart Phone		105 (70)	45 (30)
Library Services		99 (66)	51 (34)
Commercial Services		89 (59)	61 (41)

Table 3 presented the perceptual disposition of respondents regarding type of literacy facility used. From the results obtained, 98% used physical resources, while 52% do not. 62% prefer online resources such as OPAC and OER while 57% opted otherwise, 30% preferred to use media resources while 70% said no, 40% used personal computer while 60% do not, 70% utilized their Smartphone while 30% don't, 66% used library services while 34% do not, 59% prefer commercial services while 41% said no. It is concluded that there is high level of Smartphone usage among UG students as information literacy facility.

*Research Question 2: What is the Level of Accessibility of Students to Literacy Skills?*

**Table4: Showing the Level of Accessibility by Used by UG Students to Literacy Skills**

Items	Responses	Percentage (%)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
Application of Internet		93 (62)	71 (57)
Library/Usage Skills		79 (80)	71 (20)
Knowledge/Literacy Skills		54 (36)	96 (64)
Interest/Aspiration for the Library		78 (52)	72 (48)
Relevant Framework Avail		39 (26)	111 (74)
Leisure Purpose		45 (30)	105 (70)
Conducive Environment		69 (46)	81 (54)
Attitude of Staff		72 (48)	78 (52)
Personal Efforts/Skills		66 (44)	84 (56)

From table 4, 62% applied internet while 57% do not, 80% have library/usage skills while 20% do not have, and 36% have information literacy skills while 64% claimed ignorance, 52% have

interest and aspiration for information literacy while 48% do not. It shows that 26% agreed with relevant library framework while 74% disagreed, 30% access information for leisure purpose while 70% said no, 46% convince with conducive library environment while 54% opposed, 48% satisfied with the library staff attitude while 52 do not and 44% used personal effort while 56% seek help assistance.

**Research Question 3:** Which Ways Libraries Impacted through Information Literacy?

**Table 5:** Showing Ways Libraries Impacted through Information Literacy Skills

Items	Responses	Percentage (%)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
Improvement on C/A		96 (64)	54 (36)
Improve on assignment		84 (56)	66 (44)
Increase efficiencies		96 (64)	54 (36)
Handle academic task		78 (53)	72 (48)
Consistency in task delivery		75 (50)	75 (50)
Overcoming time		105 (70)	45 (30)
Overcoming comm. Barrier		81 (54)	69 (46)
General Studies		99 (66)	51 (34)

64% agreed that library and information literacy skills improved conduct of their continuous assessment while 36% said no, 56% said it improved on class assignment while 44% disagreed, 64% agreed that literacy skills increase their efficiency while 36% said no, 53% can now handle academic task effectively while 48% cannot, 50% can deliver academic task systematically and consistently while 50% seems not, 70% said it can help to overcome time while 30% said no, 54% agreed that information literacy can overcome their communication barrier while 46% disagreed and 66% said general studies course impacted for their literacy skills while 35% disagreed.

**Research Question 4:** What is the Challenges Militating against Accessibility to Information Literacy?

**Table 6: Showing Challenges Militating against Accessibility to Information Literacy**

Items	Responses	Percentage (%)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
Poor internet services		87 (58)	63 (42)
Frequent power blackout		111 (74)	39 (26)
Lack of basic literacy training		105 (70)	45 (30)
High cost of data/equipment		90 (60)	60 (40)
Lack of ICT skills		31 (54)	69 (64)
Lack of internet subscription		42 (28)	108 (72)
Strict library regulations		45 (30)	105 (70)
Perceived nature		27 (18)	123 (82)

Table 6 highlighted that, 58% poor internet service was the reason behind challenges against accessibility to information literacy according to respondents while 42% disagreed the assertion, 74% said frequent power blackout resulted to the current literacy challenges while 26% said no, 70% agreed of lack of literacy training while 30% disagreed, 60% agreed with high cost of both data and equipment while 40% disagreed, 54% attest that lack of ICT skills as a factor while 64% said no, 28% confirm that lack of internet subscription hinder access to literacy skills while 72% disagreed, 30% said strict library rules and regulation as basis for not accessing information literacy and can also prevent use while 70% debunk and 18% perceive nature of literacy skills as not necessary while 82% sees the need of information literacy skills.

## **Discussion of Findings**

In analyzing and discussing the findings of this research, the researchers address each well-established research question. From the analysis, the researchers conclude that the students of the 400 levels responded more than any other level because their high response is seen as a result of their intense academic activities, which they embark on at this point strictly for research work. For example, Breivik (2011) has seen that a library develops good reading skills in people and encourages long-term learning habits through listening, reading, and viewing a variety of learning resources. On the type of information literacy facilities used by the respondents, the study revealed a high level of Smartphone use among UG students as an information literacy facility. This showed their curiosity towards the modern literacy medium or tool (information and communication technology). This is consistent with Virkus's (2011) investigation into the effect of ICT skills on undergraduate students' academic performance in higher education, which indicated that a student's capacity for evaluation was affected. Interpret, locate, use, and disseminate information increased as a result of their proficiency in acquired ICT skills. Data collected on the level of accessibility of UG students to literacy skills revealed a high rate of students applying the Internet but not having basic reading and writing skills or understanding information literacy is processing skills to their academic performance. Magoi (2014) pointed out that there are some problems with the need to use student information retrieval tools, which include a lack of knowledge to use electronic resources, an insufficient power supply, the absence of internet facilities, and a lack of sufficient time to use information resources and services. In terms of the ways in which libraries have affected students' information literacy skills, the study revealed the positive impact of information literacy on the academic performance of Kwasu undergraduate students. Johnson and Lampson (2016) assessed the

effect of four information literacy workshops conducted among previously enrolled Diploma in Nursing students at Northumbria University and found that all students improved their academic scores in the next task is to increase confidence levels and information literacy. According to ACRL (2006), information literacy enables students to grasp subject matter, expand the scope of their research, become more self-directed, and exert more control over their own learning.. In the same view, Wilson (2001) maintains that research shows that reading scores for students in schools that focus on improving their library programs are on average 8–21% higher than comparable schools that do not have such development. In terms of challenges to accessing information literacy, the study reported that a lack of basic literacy training, followed by frequent blackouts and poor Internet services, was a major barrier to information literacy use by KWASU undergraduate students. Julien and Boone (2004) hypothesized that it is because of the information age and what information is driven by globalization. Many students mentioned that some ICT users faced problems of ignorance, lack of internet access, low bandwidth, subscription problems, and a lack of skills in retrieving information. According to the Council of Education Ministers of Canada (2011), teaching digital literacy is one of the "most pressing teaching and learning issues facing Canadians today". From this analysis, we conclude that the majority of students have been positively affected by using the literacy facilities available in the library. Their positive response is seen as a result of their intense academic interest and activities.



## **Conclusion**

The new educational paradigm has created the need for new directions and a redefinition of the role and influence of libraries towards information literacy in higher educational institutions. Developing countries are faced with the need to develop information infrastructure for an information-literate population as information literacy becomes a non-negotiable indicator of capacity building and empowerment. Information literacy skills have become an issue in many academic libraries, and much work has been done to offer information literacy education to staff and students. Initiatives at higher institutions have taken a variety of forms, but there are trends towards integrating information literacy into subject areas. Besides intellectual professional discourse, librarians should conduct constructive dialogue with policymakers for effective partnership between library and faculty, integrated "information literacy" programs, integration of modern ICT capabilities, use of active learning methods, etc. Factors such as politics, teaching and learning approaches, the understanding and attitudes of faculty and students, and resources (budget, staffing, facilities, and time) may create a gap while implementing and investing in information literacy skills in the libraries of a higher education institution.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended the following:

1. Library management shall ensure that all undergraduates are formally enrolled in the main library to improve academic learning and achievement.
2. The university management shall offer a compulsory general course on information literacy to enable potential graduate literacy skills for a research project.
3. Frequent capacity building and training in information literacy skills should be organized for staff, undergraduate students, and postgraduate students.
4. The designated centers within the campus shall be provided with sufficient literacy facilities to enable users to have close access.
5. Librarians must devise means of reaching out to students in order to enhance the research process and maximize academic performance.
6. To achieve the goals of learning and research, priority should be given to the proper use of information resources to improve students' reading and writing skills and their overall intellectual growth and development.

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