Teaching information literacy in universities in Zimbabwe: the role of libraries

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Introduction and background

The presentation looks at how IL was introduced in university libraries in Zimbabwe.

- Why was it necessary?
- What are the purposes of the programmes?
- What is the programme content?
- What are the benefits?
- What are the major challenges associated with IL teaching?
- What are the conclusions?
Introduction and background

- The number of universities has expanded from one in 1980 to 14 in 2012
- More state and private universities are on the cards
- Expansion of HEI has been met with challenges in both material and financial resources
- Libraries and information services have not been spared
Introduction and background

Why was it necessary?
- Information overload
- ICT developments
  - The internet
  - Information retrieval challenges (search strategies etc)
- Changing formats and modes of access
- Alternative information sources
- Shrinking university budgets
- How can libraries maximise electronic resources access and utilisation?
Introduction and background

What are the purposes of the programmes?

- Increasing user awareness to information resources
- Enables the identification of the types and formats of potential sources for information
- Enables effective and efficient access to needed information
- Evaluate information sources
- Provides a framework for understanding the economic, legal, ethical and social issues surrounding the use of information
- Increasing utilisation of information resources
Research methodology

- A questionnaire was distributed to twelve universities
  - 9 state universities
  - 3 private universities
- Responses
  - 6 state universities
  - 3 private university
- Response rate of 75%
IL teaching

IL Teaching vs Library Orientation

- 2 (22.2%) do not teach IL
- 7 (77.8%) teach IL
  - 2 (29%) IL taught as a stand alone module
  - 5 (71%) IL taught as part of another module
- 9 (100%) of the responding institutions offer staff and students the general library orientation
Target groups

Level at which module is taught

- 7 (100%) Undergraduate level
- 3 (43%) Postgraduate level
- 4 (57%) Teaching staff/lecturers

- “Introduction to electronic resources, citation styles for both print and electronic sources”
- “focus on electronic resources access: faculty based e-resources training seminars held every semester”
- “including teaching staff helps achieve academic acceptance (members sit in Academic Board and Senate Committees)”
- “as and when it is necessary, particularly to market e-resources and increase accessibility”
IL and student assessment

Information literacy teaching:

- 5 (71%) IL course contributes towards students’ term mark/paper
- 2 (29%) IL course still at implementation level

IL module status

- 6 (86%) IL compulsory to all undergraduates
- Not compulsory for postgraduates and teaching staff
Other results of the study

Responsibility for the IL curriculum
- Library staff teams which include Assistant Librarians-Deputy Librarian level (71%)
- None response (14.5%)
- English Department (14.5%)
  - Frequency of revision

Responsibility for teaching
- Professional librarians (71%)
- None response (14.5%)
- English Department staff (14.5%)
  “The librarians are only invited to teach library related issues”

Other stakeholders involved
- English Department, Computer Centre, Communications Skills Centre
IL components

- Introduction to IL
- Information organisation
- Information finding/seeking tools (manual and electronic)
- Information retrieval & search strategies (manual and online)
- Evaluating information and information sources
- Ethical issues and plagiarism
- (Economic, social and legal issues of information)

Emphasis tends to be more towards electronic resources, the Internet, and on referencing.
IL components

- The Internet and electronic resources
  - Electronic journals
    - Open access
    - Subscription databases
  - Institutional Repositories
  - Electronic book collections
- Citation styles
  - Print and electronic sources
  - In-text
  - Bibliography/Reference list
  - Distinguishing between pdf and html sources
Computer literacy and Information literacy

How does IL fuse with computer literacy

- 29% indicated that CL was taught as part of IL
- 14% none response
- 57% indicated that CL was taught separately
  - Taught as part of introduction to computer science
  - Taught to all first year students as part of the first semester orientation and as part of other computer related courses
  - Taught as part of compulsory level 1: Introduction to Information Technology course
Computer literacy and Information literacy

- Effects of Computer Literacy on IL
  - It enables better internet and electronic retrieval skills
  - It enables effective utilisation of IL skills
  - It enables effective access and utilisation of library resources
  - Ability to use computers and the internet is critical since IL is inclined towards electronic information usage
  - Computer skills are essential for effective information retrieval and use
Review of IL course content

- Annually (43%)
- None response (14.3%)
- Once per semester during vacations (14.3%)
- Dependent on English Dept (14.3%)
- Once since inception (14.3%)
  - Teaching Librarians continuously review and update relevant sections in their teaching
  - E.g. new database subscriptions
Outcomes

IL achieving its intended objectives (57%)

- Improved e-resources usage
- Improved student projects
- Increased research output by lecturers
- Increase in the usage of electronic resources as well as traditional library resources (as users become aware of alternative sources available)
- Increase in user enquiries in the Reader Services section
Outcomes

IL not achieving its intended objectives (29%)

- There is not much increase in the usage of e-resources
- Students and staff are still more on print sources
- E-resources statistics indicate that the university community is not using the resources as they should do
- Impact still to be felt since the module has just been introduced

None response (14%)
Challenges in IL teaching

- Limited resources
  - Limited computing facilities
  - Limited printing facilities
- The number of teaching librarians against students is too high (hence at times University Librarians have to be involved)
- Poor internet connectivity
- Electricity interruptions
- Stakeholder participation – library staff are not involved in the programme and are not given an opportunity to make contributions
- Getting slots on the timetables is a major struggle
Personal experiences

- IL teaching at the University of Zimbabwe
  - Curriculum design
  - Gaining acceptance
  - Strategies
  - The role of ZULC
- IL teaching at Bindura University of Science Education (Zimbabwe)
- IL teaching at the University of Zululand South Africa
  - Course content
  - Independent information retrieval by students
Conclusions

- IL been positively received in the university (100%)
  - “Graduate students have shown a lot on interest in the course”
  - “Aim to make it a standalone course”
  - “Plans in place to make IL embedded in the curriculum”
Recommendations

- Allocating more resources
- Involving all relevant stakeholders to enhance participation and resource sharing
- Make IL a service course that one receives once in their entire duration of their study programme
Thank you