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Strategies Used to Impart Information Literacy Skills among Library Users at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

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Abstract	Original Research Article

The rapid implementation of information technology worldwide has changed and continues to change all areas of life. The education, research and development sectors are highly affected by these technologies. New opportunities for accessing information, teaching, learning and training through the delivery of digital content are now widespread. The purpose of this study was to assess the utilization of information communication technologies as a tool for information literacy among library users of Catholic University of Eastern Africa's Gaba Campus, Eldoret, Kenya. Based on the study, this paper examines the strategies used to promote information communication technologies as a tool for information literacy. Survey research design was adopted and the target population was 537 registered users comprising the library staff, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students. Stratified random sampling technique was used to classify the population into strata of library staff, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and library registered students. Simple random sampling was applied on the strata to select the respondents. The sample size for the study was 113 respondents. Questionnaires were administered to the selected participants. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study found that the major strategies that the library management adopted in enhancing information literacy were provision of written materials in information literacy, one-on-one training, demonstration, inducting new users and organizing seminars and workshops. The strategies were fairly effective. Therefore, it was recommended that the libraries and university management should strengthen and diversify strategies to ensure library users are able to access and use accurate information to solve their academic problems. The study is of value to academic libraries as it informs practice and policies in enhancing information literacy among the staff and students who depend on the library for their information needs.
Keywords: Strategies, Information Literacy Skills, Library Users, Catholic University, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Information literacy (IL), along with information communication technology (ICT), has become very vital in library environment. Information literacy in library operations and services is essential not only in library information resources provision, but also plays a critical part in training library users and imparting them with knowledge about information sources and access to authentic information from vast array of electronic information sources. According to Orr, Appleton and Wallin [1], information and communication technologies are the most influential factors of information society. The term ICT incorporates the use of hardware and software for transportation of information and conducting communication. It covers information communication technology equipment and services, internet service provision, media broadcasting, library, information and documentation centres and among others [2].

In the developed world, ICT has helped Institution of higher learning to compete academically within and beyond; in emerging economies such as China and India, it is gaining much attention; but in developing nations like Kenya only very little attention goes to it. Technological advancement has compelled libraries to adopt interactive online media for their survival [3]. In Africa, the development of IL faced a fast growth in the 1990s through to the 2000s with the emergence of automated libraries [4]. Even though there was the emergence of such libraries, the process was characterized by poor or no infrastructure,

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inadequate ICT equipment such as computers and low uptake of new technologies, many students at various levels of education still lack skills to explore different information resources [5]. Most of the African countries began to implement IL as a worldwide trend in institution of higher learning libraries. The Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa Library and Information Associations (SCECSAL) Report by the Institute of Development Studies and Information Training and Outreach Centre for Africa affirms that a growing number of institutions developed IL due to its impact on students' academic output [6]. Librarians and information professionals around the world believe that the teaching of an IL programme enhances the learning experience of students and it becomes a device for lifelong learning. This is supported by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), which indicates that 'IL forms the basis of lifelong learning and enables learners to master content and extend their investigations to become more self-directed' [7].

In Kenya, most universities already ha various IL initiatives in place by the 1990s [8]. Kavulya argues that although ICT is being incorporated into the management of university libraries in Kenya, there is need for adoption of strategic planning in all areas of library management in order for them to remain viable sources of information [9]. University libraries in Kenya have to make use of modern ICTs so as to facilitate better access to local and global information. To meet the growing needs of their users, Heinrichs and Lim suggest, libraries needed to hire skilled librarians that can create and disseminate knowledge in the digital age [10]. Abdelrahman adds that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a must for information professionals in academic libraries so as to be able to maintain up to-date levels of expertise that would enable them to cope with the evolving ICTs [11].

Kimani and Onyancha undertook a research on information literacy skills and competencies among oncoming first-year undergraduate students at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Kenya [12]. The study was carried out during the 2013/2014 academic year. The findings revealed that just a few of all oncoming students had limited knowledge of strategies used to search for information. Some students possessed computer skills such as the use of the internet and its applications (e.g. social networking sites and websites) as well as Word processing and statistical applications. Others were not familiar with the various retrieval tools and their applications.

Strategies for Imparting Information Literacy Skills
The concept of information literacy emerged with the advent of information technologies in 1970s which has taken shape in the 21st century [13]. Bruce indicates that information literacy is associated with information practices and critical thinking in information and communication technology environment [14]. Murison argues that information skills and information technology skills are essential parts of the wider concept of information literacy [15]. Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) describes information literacy as the action of providing members of society with information competencies necessary to operate and function effectively within a given society [16]. Brine is in agreement that information literacy and information skills are synonyms [17]. Therefore, information literacy entails finding information, searching information and using various tools to critically evaluate the results and apply it successfully. Moore argues that information related competencies entail several blocks of capacities in relation to information handling and use, which includes identifying, locating, gathering, selecting, storing, recording, retrieving and processing information [18].

Hall describes information literacy as the ability of the people to know when there is need for information to be able to identify, locate, retrieve, evaluate and effectively use information to solve the problem which forms the basis for lifelong learning [19]. Johnston and Webber indicate that information literacy is the adoption of appropriate and relevant information behaviour to satisfy, through a given channel, information needs [20]. It also incorporates a critical awareness and wise use of information in keeping with inherent laws and ethical considerations. Experts also indicate that information literacy entails knowledge of one's information concerns and needs and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate and communicate effectively. Nyarigoti assessed information literacy skills of undergraduate students at the United States International University, Africa [21]. The study involved final year students from all departments in the University. The study sought to find out whether, at their final year, students had acquired the necessary skills to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate and use information effectively. The students were subjected to an information literacy test to assess their competence. Findings showed that students' use of the library and its resources was low with most of them largely relying on search engines such as Google as the main sources of information. The study recommended that information literacy education and digital information skills be taught at undergraduate level in the university.

Weiner argues that information literacy has been an area of interest among librarians and information professionals [22]. Association of College and Research Librarians indicates that librarians present instructions in library research and information literacy [7]. This indicates that an information literate person is able to recognize and understand information needs, to search for appropriate information, and appropriately evaluate, analyse and apply the information obtained by

using related technology. The effects of these literacy programmes enable the librarians to improve how skills are communicated to the library users thereby making them better users of information materials.

Library research instruction provides users with a general knowledge on how to use available resources in the library and provide guidance on the same. Librarians also provide basic instructions on the research process, equipping users with skills on how to develop information searching strategies. Information literacy instruction is a component that combines information literacy and information skills. It offers a foundation for the evaluation of information sources, ethical use of information in technological world as well as the ability to access, understand, analyse, synthesize and apply the information obtained. Therefore, information literacy skills are essential components for the success of any academic environment. According to Moore, information literacy is a key component for library users when accessing and using information [18]. It entails the ability to identify information needs, locate the information, retrieve the information within the required time, evaluate the obtained information, and use and distribute the acquired information.

A strategy is systematic design to achieve a particular purpose [23]. Levy, Loebbecke and Powell indicate that information access is not the problem, but the critical part is how to utilize the accessed information [24]. Library users need skills to locate, identify, evaluate and use information to solve different information problems. Levy *et al.* further argue that poor library use and lack of literacy skills by library users have led to underutilization of information resources in the institution libraries. A study by Agaba on e-resources usage at Makerere University found minimal usage of e-resources among library users [25]. This was a clear indication of inadequate or minimal information literacy skills among users. These sentiments echoed those of Osunrinde, Adekiya and Adyemo who propose an urgent need to equip library users with skills such as information literacy skills, computer skills, information retrieval skills, among others, to promote information resource utilization [26]. Swain and Panda argue that the library users' attitudes towards access and use of information is gradually changing from paper-based information resources to electronic resources, hence the need for computer literacy among the users [27]. Singh and Stern add that information communication technologies have brought tremendous changes to the nature, structure and boundaries of information [28].

Bibliographic instruction is one of the concepts that librarians need to use and train their users [29]. Bundy notes that bibliographic instructions are tools and skills necessary to effectively find and make use of information in the library [30]. These instructions are a significant requirement for the librarians to provide instructions following the explosion of information. Other studies have showed that these instructions broadly focus on access and retrieval of information but lack the larger consideration of critical thinking. Maina notes that there is need for more in-depth instruction on information among library users, which led to raise of information literacy instructions [31]. Information professionals, in this case librarians, need to provide instructions to guide users on how to search, access, retrieve, evaluate and use information.

Information literacy instruction is the instruction given by librarians in a set of skills that cover various aspects such as identifying the need for information, how to find it, how to evaluate it and how to use it to meet their need for information. Information literacy instructions respond to the availability of information beyond the library with the view that users would not have skills to evaluate and selectively choose the best information for their use [29]. Uwusu-Ansah notes that information literacy training uses library instruction tools as a basis for achieving higher order skills for processing and obtaining results for making better decisions [32]. Information literacy programmes represent a change in scope from previous library instructions with a shift from teaching tools for finding information in a library to focus on broader concepts, all information users and not just library users.

Statement of the Problem

Information literacy in most university libraries in Kenya is in its lowest point. Given that most academic libraries have integrated the necessary technologies, the state of information literacy among library users has increasingly been inadequate. Emergence of information communication technologies has also affected provision of services by information professionals in academic institutions. Yet, proper access to relevant information is critical to academic functions of teaching and learning, research and publication. In the current knowledge and digital society, information communication technologies are central in the management and handling of information. Technological innovations, such as Web 2.0, library 2.0, social networking, virtual libraries, digital services and digital information systems, have created a need to re-examine users' information literacy skills, particularly with regard to ICT. Makori argues that academic libraries in Kenya face a lot of challenges in utilization of information communication technologies to facilitate their library services [33]. These challenges stem mainly from the changing information environment, technological dynamism, changes in user needs and poor strategies in promoting information literacy skills. According to the Commission for University Education (CUE), the government of Kenya is doing all it can to ensure universities are of good quality, have proper accreditation, good infrastructure,

qualified staff, and well-equipped libraries with ICT integration, among other measures [34].

Despite the efforts made to ensure integration of ICTs in university libraries, access and use of information in these libraries, especially satellite campuses, leave a lot to be desired. For example, most students are not in a position to locate, identify, evaluate and use information effectively. Since CUE tends to put more emphasizes on quality standards in public institutions than in private universities, these problems are worse in private universities. If this situation is not remedied, the high expectations on information communication technologies as a means to improve service delivery in university libraries may remain a mirage. This scenario explains why the research sought to identify and discuss the strategies used to impart information literacy skills among library users at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa's Gaba Campus, Eldoret, Kenya.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research used cross-sectional survey design to assess the utilization of information communication technologies as a tool for information literacy among library users. Cross-sectional survey research design was instrumental in collecting data at a particular point in time rather than over a period of time and it allowed examination of multiple factors and outcome in one single study. The study was carried out at Catholic University of Eastern Africa library, Eldoret Campus. The researcher was interested in knowing whether CUEA, being one of the private universities in the region, utilizes ICT to promote information literacy and to enhance service delivery. The Ministry of Education, through Commission for University Education (CUE), has been pushing to ensure universities are of good quality, have proper accreditation, good infrastructure, qualified staff and well-equipped libraries. Therefore, the rationale of this study was to determine how CUEA deploys ICT to realize the aspirations of quality education.

The researcher targeted a population of 537 respondents from the institution who are only registered library users. The target population encompassed 7 library staff, 27 teaching staff, 23 non-teaching staff and 480 students below. Using the Nassiuma formula the researcher arrived at a sample of 113 library users [35]. Stratified random sampling was used to arrive at the sample of the study. In this study the strata were the library staff, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students. Purposive sampling was used to select library staff who provided key information for the study. On the other hand, simple random sampling was applied on the remaining strata's (teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students). The study used questionnaires to collect data. The data that was collected from the field was cleaned, edited and coded. The quantitative data from the questionnaires was entered into the SPSS software for analysis. The results were tabulated descriptively in form of frequency tables or frequency distribution. Qualitative data was analysed thematically. The data was then presented in various ways such as pie charts, frequency tables and graphs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to identify and discuss the strategies used to promote information literacy skills among library users at the Gaba Campus of CUEA, Eldoret, Kenya. To achieve this objective, the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statements summarized in Table 1. The responses were rated using a 5-point Likert scale in which SD=Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, U=Undecided, A=Agree and SA=Strongly Agree.

Table-1: Strategies used to Promote Information Literacy

Statement		SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean
Provision of written materials in information literacy	F	2	9	8	49	45	4.12
	%	1.8	8	7.1	43.4	39.8	
One-on-one training	F	2	6	14	54	37	4.04
	%	1.8	5.3	12.4	47.8	32.7	
Through demonstration	F	5	4	15	58	31	3.94
	%	4.4	3.5	13.3	51.3	27.4	
Conducting guided tour to new users	F	1	2	10	43	57	4.35
	%	0.9	1.8	8.8	38.1	50.4	
Organization of seminars and workshops	F	8	21	30	36	18	3.31
	%	7.1	18.6	26.5	31.9	15.9	
Orientation skills on sources of information and its users	F	2	6	10	27	68	4.35
	%	1.8	5.3	8.8	23.9	60.2	

Table 1 indicates that 83.2% of the respondents agreed that provision of written materials enhanced information literacy among library users. The level of agreement of the other strategies were as follows: one-on-one training (80.5% agreed); demonstration (78.7% agreed); conducting guided tours to new users (88.5% agreed); organizing seminars and workshops (47.8% agreed); orientation skills (84.1% agreed). Organization of seminars and workshops was rated slightly lower than other strategies, implying that

the university did not frequently use the strategy as a means of promoting information literacy.

The findings indicated that the most dominant strategies employed by the university to impart information literacy skills among library users were: orientation skills on sources of information and its users; conducting guided tour to new users and provision of written materials in information literacy. This is in line with the findings of Weiner that librarians use various strategies that include presenting

instructions in library research and information literacy [22]. The literacy programmes are implemented to improve librarians' ability to impart information literacy skills to library users.

The strategies identified above were also rated for efficiency. Table 2 gives respondents' views on the effectiveness of the strategies employed by the university to impart information literacy skills in library users.

Table-2: Effectiveness of the Strategies Applied by the University

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not effective	4	3.5	3.5	3.5
	Fairly Effective	29	25.7	25.7	29.2
	Effective	48	42.5	42.5	71.7
	Very effective	32	28.3	28.3	100.0

Table 2 shows that 42.5% of the respondents rated the strategies used by the university to promote information literacy as effective, 28.3% as very effective, 25.7% as fairly effective while 3.5% felt that the strategies were not effective. It was concluded that the strategies used by the university to impart information literacy skills in library users were fairly effective. Researchers such as Nyarigoti [21] and Weiner [22] established that librarians use various strategies which include presenting instructions in library research and information literacy. The results from this study demonstrate a need to apply other strategies to library users, which include continuous organization of seminars and workshops on library literacy, offering orientation skills on sources of information and its users and integrating information literacy into the formal courses offered at the university.

Access to information from the library is not difficult. However, the critical part is how to evaluate that the information accessed is the right one and then utilize that information. Therefore, strategies for promoting information literacy are meant to enable library users to access the right information and hence solve their research or academic problems. Library users do need skills to locate, identify, evaluate and use the accessed information to solve given information-related problems such as research. Therefore, strengthening the effectiveness of the university strategies for promoting information literacy can result in quality research, teaching, learning and publications, which are the hallmarks of effective universities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
The major strategies that the university management uses to enhance information literacy among library users are provision of written materials in information literacy, one-on-one training, demonstration, inducting new users and organizing seminars and workshops. These strategies were fairly

effective. However, some of the library users feel that more is needed to improve the effectiveness of the strategies. Therefore, practical orientation systems such as individual instructions, guided tours and group instructions should be enhanced to enhance proper understanding of the library systems. Moreover, the university library staff should design information literacy programmes that attract all categories of users, including university junior and senior staff, and even the members of the society the university serves.

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