Implementation of information literacy programmes in public libraries

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Introduction

The 21st century has brought enormous change in information provision throughout the world as a result of new information and technological development. Rader (2012, pp. 43-49) observe that these changes affect every segment of the society and all levels of education. New learning centres are evolving based on the concepts of resource-based teaching and lifelong learning. Students and other categories of users need high levels of literacy.

The term information literacy was coined by Paul Zurkowski in a 1974 report on future needs for various competences in work places, in business and industry in the USA (USA) (Bawden, 2011, p. 76). Information literacy has also been described as a way of learning (Bruce, 2008, p. 92). This interpretation relates information literacy to the concept of lifelong learning (Bruce, 2008, p. 43). Information literacy is becoming an increasingly essential part of public library user education. Despite the many definitions on information literacy, the term remains a foreign concept to many non-librarians. As Virkus (2009, p. 98) points out, "information literacy has spread mainly among librarians and information professionals and neither is explicitly or extensively recognized in other circles". The term information literacy was coined largely to account for the burgeoning of electronic information. Electronic information has become ubiquitous, with cellular and wireless networks routinely available virtually wherever the user happens to be. Many young students entering higher education are completely at home with all the latest electronic gadgetry. They have found that "digital technologies enable ultra-rapid access to the richest sources, wherever they are located in the world's collection" (Diehm, 2012, p. 75). Consequently, students have become increasingly reliant on electronic information.

The Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) is a corporate body of the Kenyan government and was established by an act of parliament in 1965. The aim of establishing KNLS was to provide library and information services to the Kenyan public. It was intended to take charge of the development of public library services in Kenya. KNLS is responsible for preserving the national heritage of the country, publishing the Kenya National Bibliography (KNB) and the Kenya Periodicals Directory (KPD), providing national reference services amongst other functions. The KNLS mandate is to promote, establish, equip, manage, maintain and develop public libraries in Kenya. It is the Board's conviction that information materials are outstandingly effective in transmitting knowledge and communicating ideas and that reading encourages the fullest development of thought and the participation of the citizen in the society. Therefore, the KNLS board provides a variety of services on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. KNLS has a dual responsibility of a public library as well as performing the duties of the national library in Kenya. As a public library, KNLS provides adult lending services, children library service, mobile library service, camel and donkey library mobile services, school book boxes service, reference service, user education service, service to institutions, informal training for librarians, book distribution/donations, email and Internet services and reprographic services.

In public libraries, orientation is offered mainly to new users, and many of them are unable to use the information resources effectively, as they do not have adequate information skills. Although orientation is given to new users of many public libraries, the main challenges faced by KNLS branch libraries today is the delivery of relevant information literacy skills, which will enable users to retrieve and access both print and electronic information (Weiler, 2009, p. 132). Public libraries have historically offered instructional courses in a variety of ways, embedding them in a range of strategic courses, such as reference, instructional media and user needs. Other challenges in the public library sector are that customers' requirements are very diverse, and the content may only be required by small numbers of people, which affects the economy of scale (Probert, 2009, p. 54). Even previous learning experience and ability are not homogenous, and attitudes to learning are very diverse. For a significant number of people, learning may also be seen as a negative thing to be avoided (Weiler, 2009, p. 132). The new technological changes have also contributed to challenges for many users, as they lack information literacy skills that can enable them to access both print and electronic information resources. To fill the gaps, it was necessary for the researchers to explore the current status regarding the implementation of information literacy programmes in public libraries and suggest possible solutions.

Instructional methods applied in information literacy programmes

The idea of library instruction or bibliographic instruction (BI)has been one of the concepts and tasks associated with librarians for many years (Grassian and Kaplowitz, 2009, p. 23). The term "BI" is used here to represent library instruction of various types, excluding the more recent term "information literacy instruction" to which it is compared. BI has usually referred to learning the tools and skills required to successfully use a library for finding information (Budd, 2011). With the increasing amount of information from different sources and the growing complexity associated with retrieving information in the 1980s and 1990s, librarians were frequently asked by college faculty to provide specific instruction on how to do this (Grassian and Kaplowitz, 2009, pp. 29-33). While BI tended to focus on library activities and the use of tools to get information, it lacked the larger consideration of critical thinking and broader tasks needed to do research.

The broader concept of information skills and library instruction may be divided into two parts:

(1) lower-order competencies, like information-seeking and retrieval; and
(2) higher-order understanding, extending the lower-order skills to include evaluating information search results as to quality, relevance and validity and determining how to use the information (Moje, 2012, p. 23).

The first is associated with BI, while the second refers to information literacy, which was developed by librarians to meet the need for such understanding. Information literacy represents a change in scope from previous library instruction, with a shift from teaching tools for finding information in a library to a focus on broader concepts by all information users and not only library users. Information literacy builds upon the library instruction of the past to extend its breadth (Owusu-Ansah and Edward, 2007, p. 56).

The public library is a place which supports adult education and lifelong learning and has the capability of narrowing the digital divide by providing free computer and Internet access and offering training courses to improve people's IL skills. Governments around the world have recognized the critical role of public libraries in developing IL skills of their citizens. As a result, funds have been allocated to public libraries to purchase computers and establish Internet connections, and a variety of IL approaches have been used (Gross, 2011, p. 157).Although the role of public libraries has been acknowledged as a valuable provider of IL development, existing literature primarily focuses on addressing the role of public libraries and their IL activities. There is still a lack of relevant study investigating IL training in public libraries, especially in the quality and organization of IL courses and the IL skills of public librarians. As IL competencies have been identified as a crucial element to foster lifelong learning and keep up with the fast-changing world, integrating IL learning into education at all levels should be a priority concern (Snavely, 2008, p. 38). He emphasized that even though people claim that they have a high degree of confidence in using computers, their IL skills might be disgraceful. In public libraries, information, in most cases, can be easily retrieved from the Internet, but users waste so much valuable time because of a lack of adequate skills to find appropriate resources, evaluate information and use the information effectively in solving problems.

Recent studies (Barnard, 2009, p. 509; Probert, 2009, p. 39; Shanahan, 2007, p. 312) have revealed that users' IL skills need to be enhanced, and careful attention needs to be paid to these skills in primary, secondary and even in higher education sectors. Public libraries are primarily driven bottom up, by the customers' agenda and far less by top down curricula. Public library service provision is by definition very broad, as it is driven by the information and cultural requirements of the general public. This has a number of challenges for developing information literacy programmes for customers, which need to be considered when deciding approaches to information literacy.

This study adopted Christine Bruce's seven faces model of information literacy. Bruce (1997, p. 10) examines information literacy using phenographic methods to determine how individuals experience information. The model frames information literacy into seven different ways of experiencing information use through active and reflective engagement with the relevant information practices. Bruce's seven ways or faces model of information literacy is applicable in this study because it promotes critical thinking skills and also assists users to understand how to access, use and utilize information.

Methodology

Sample size and sampling techniques

The population of the study comprised 100 library users and 15 members of library staff. Using a formula by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for determining the population sample size, a total of 80 survey questionnaires were distributed to the library users, but only 57 (71.25 per cent) of the respondents completed and returned the survey questionnaires. The research tools comprised both open-ended and close-ended questions. In addition, a face-to-face interview with 15 members of staff was conducted. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used, and data were collected through use of questionnaires and interviews. The study also used stratified sampling to select users of the library and staff. This is because it aimed at proportionate representation with a view of accounting for the difference in sub-group characteristics and, in this case, users of the library at the KNLS who are in different sub-groups, such as children and adults. Stratified sampling technique was adopted because specific library staff handles information literacy programmes. It allowed the researchers to select a sample that provided data needed in different categories of respondents. The researcher carried out a pilot study

through questionnaires and interview schedule which involved 20 respondents selected from one of the branch libraries of KNLS. This was aimed at testing the tool with a view to establishing its appropriateness for this study. The researchers were able to use their own judgment to achieve objectives of the study, and also, he interviewed those people who, in his opinion, were likely to have the required information and were willing to share information.

Self-assessment of information literacy skills

The study sought to establish how respondents rated their information literacy skills. According to the results, none of the respondents was rated as excellent, 7 per cent were rated as very good and 63.2 per cent were rated as good, while 22.8 per cent rated their information literacy skills as average. In all, 7 per cent of the respondents rated their information literacy skills as poor. This shows that the majority, 63 per cent of the respondents, rated their IL skills as good. The Table I shows the response rate.

Table I.
Self-assessment of information literacy skills

Responses	Number of respondents	%
Excellent	0	0
Very Good	4	7
Good	36	63.2
Average	13	22.8
Poor	4	7
Total number of respondents	57	100

Preferences of information sources

The respondents were asked about the information sources they preferred most while in the library. The purpose of this question was to find respondents' views on information resources they used most to retrieve information for their academic work or research. The results on which source of information respondents used most indicated that majority, 59.7 per cent, preferred to use printed information materials, while 28 per cent preferred the use of the Internet as a source of information. Those who used e-resources were 12.3 per cent. The respondents gave varied reasons for their preference of the Internet as a source of information. Some of the reasons they mentioned were "Access without any limitation of place and time, accessible and flexible content, makes retrieval faster and you can access a lot of materials within a short time. It is easy to access information from any place where there is internet".

The study sought to find out which other sources of information respondents relied on for relevant information for their academic work or research apart from the Internet and the library.

Awareness on services available in the library

It is important to note that several users suggested more than one service according to usage. In all, 25 per cent of library users were aware of lending services because majority are members of the library and are eligible for borrowing materials. In all, 20 per cent of the library users were aware about Internet services because of the wireless technology available within the library, where users accessed the Internet from their own laptops. About 15 per cent were aware about assistance by library staff and reference services. In all, 5 per cent were aware about online public access catalogue (OPAC) and online information materials, while 5 per cent were aware about information desk services. It was somehow evident that the services mentioned by the respondents were those that were familiar to them. Figure 4:1 shows the findings (Figure 1).

Search for information in the library

The researcher sought to find out how users searched for information in the library. The purpose of this question was to enable the researcher establish how the users searched for information from the library so as to know if they possessed information searching and retrieval skills. The researcher found out that majority, 45.6 per cent. of the users asked for assistance at the library counter. This could be due to the lack of computer literacy skills because they did not use the OPAC or Internet which required them to be computer literate. However, those who indicated that they browsed the shelves and Internet were 19.3 and 14 per cent, respectively. This revealed that a substantial number of users did not possess computer and network literacy skills. It was also interesting to note that 10.5 per cent of the respondents indicated that they asked their colleagues for assistance. It was also found out that the respondents who were stranded on the shelves or at the OPAC resorted to the counter or their colleagues for assistance as shown on Table VI (Table II).

Figure 1. *Awareness on services available in the library*

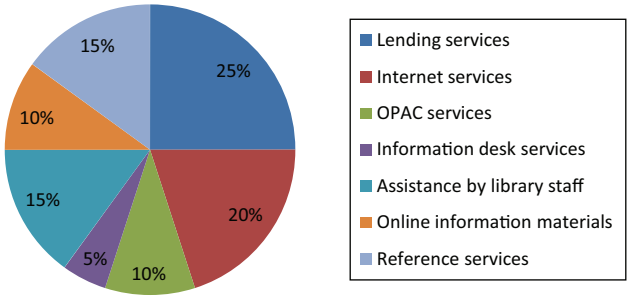


Table II.
Search for information in the library

Respondents'	Number of respondents	%
Use OPAC	6	10.5
Internet	8	14
Browse the shelves	11	19.3
Ask at the library counter	26	45.6
Ask colleagues	6	10.5
Total	57	100

Professional qualifications of library staff

The respondents were asked to state their professional qualifications. The purpose of this question was to establish the qualifications of the staff providing IL programmes in the library. As indicated in the following Table III, 53.3 per cent of those providing ILS had a diploma and those with degrees and certificates were 13.3 and 26.7 per cent, respectively. The result indicates that there is a need for attracting staff with not only Bachelors' and Masters' degrees but also with PhDs to be engaged in information literacy programmes so as to improve quality.

Effectiveness of information literacy programmes

The respondents were asked about the effectiveness of IL skills offered in the library. The purpose of the question was to establish if the current IL programme was effective. Majority of the respondents, 71.9 per cent, said that the current information literacy programme was not effective. About 24.6 per cent said that it was fairly effective; only 3.5 per cent said it was effective. None of the respondents commented on "very effective" option. The results revealed that the majority of the respondents thought that the information literacy offered was not effective. As a result, there is need to reengineer information literacy programmes in public libraries (Table IV).

Instructional methods used

Majority of the respondents, 40.4 per cent, indicated that the most commonly used method was lecture method because it was always mandatory that all newly registered users must undergo library orientation. Of all, 21.1 per cent of users preferred individual instructions because it was very convenient to users and it helped to save users time. Of the respondents, 14 per cent preferred guided tours especially during the orientation sessions. Group instructions and other methods were recorded at 5.3 per cent. Group instructions were common when the users were being introduced to OPAC or online databases. The following Table V illustrates the findings.

Table III.
Professional qualifications of staff

Respondents' qualifications	Number of respondents	%
PhD	–	0
Master's degree	1	6.7
Bachelor's degree	2	13.3
Diploma	8	53.3
Certificate	4	26.7
Other qualification	–	0
Total	15	100

Table IV.
Effectiveness on current information literacy programmes in the library

Assessment	Number of respondents	%
Very effective	0	0
Effective	2	3.5
Fairly effective	14	24.6
Not effective	41	71.9
Total	57	100

Application of information communication technology in information literacy programmes

Preference of search engines The majority of respondents, 40.4 per cent, preferred using Google, while 24.6 per cent preferred Google chrome. In all, 31.6 per cent used e-resources which were available in the library, while a small percentage, 3.5 per cent, used other search engines. The researchers noted that more needed to be done to emphasize the use of information communication technologies to enable users to access the needed information.

When the respondents were asked to state the ICT equipment/facilities they used in providing information literacy skills, the majority mentioned computers and projectors as some of the equipment they used in the provision of the information literacy programmes (Table VI).

Table V.
Instructional methods used in information literacy programmes

Method	Number of staff	%
Lecture	23	40.4
Guided tours	8	14
Group instructions	3	5.3
Demonstrations	8	14
One on one, that is, on demand	12	21.1
Other methods	3	5.3
Total	57	100

Challenges faced in the provision of information literacy programmes

In all, 36.9 per cent of the respondents indicated that the lack of adequate teaching equipment/facilities was one of the major challenges experienced followed by the lack of policy at 21.1 per cent. However, 15.8 per cent of respondents indicated that inadequate trained staff was another challenge to information literacy programmes. Inadequate funding/financial support was recorded at 14 per cent, while other unspecified challenges were recorded at 12.3 per cent (Table VII).

Challenges faced in using the library

In all, 40 per cent of the respondents complained that the Internet was very slow. This was probably due to low bandwidth allocated to the library and also due to the fact that the computers

Table VI.
Preference of search engines

Search engine	Respondents	%
Google	23	40.4
Google chrome	14	24.6
E-resources databases	18	31.6
Others	2	3.5
Total	57	100

Table VII.
Challenges faced in provision of information literacy programmes

Challenges	Number of respondents	%
Lack of teaching equipment/facilities	9	36.9
Inadequate trained staff	21	15.8
Inadequate funding	8	14
Lack of policy	12	21.1
Other challenges	7	12.3
Total	57	100

used for Internet searching were old and slow. Of the respondents, 20 per cent indicated that the other challenge was because there were few computers in the library and they did not meet the current specification requirements for a modern library.

The respondents that commented that they faced challenges on using the OPAC 6.7 per cent are an indication that some users did not attend library orientation, and this calls for the library to conduct information literacy programmes regularly to give a chance to such users (Figure 2).

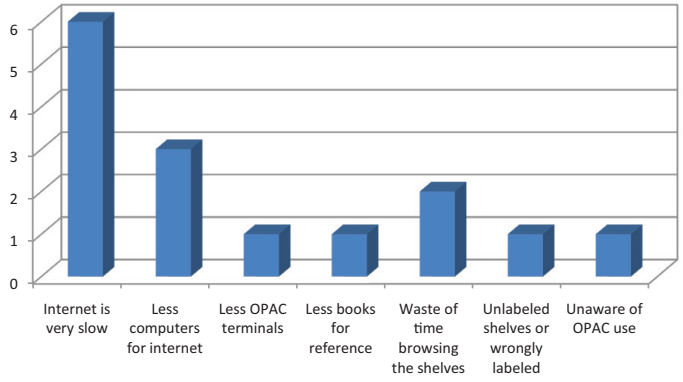
It was evident that OPAC terminals were less than 6.7 per cent because only one computer on the ground was dedicated for OPAC services although the same was used for Internet searching, and this discouraged those who wanted to access OPAC.

Suggestions for improvement of information literacy programmes

In all, 36.8 per cent of the respondents recommended that there was need to increase computers for ease of access to online information sources, while 19.3 per cent suggested that the Internet bandwidth should be increased so that searching and retrieving is faster and, at the same time, to save time. One respondent was quoted saying that:

"Computer and network literacy is very vital because users require more computers and high speed internet bandwidth to access information quickly." 2 per cent of respondents suggested that the library should be open up to 9.00 p.m. while 7 per cent of the respondents recommended that the reading space should be increased.

Figure 2. *Challenges faced in using the library*



Conclusion

- To improve information literacy programmes in public libraries in Kenya and also make them more effective, a proactive approach is needed. This can be achieved by raising awareness among users, librarians and other stakeholders on the importance of information literacy for lifelong learning. Various methods like seminars, workshops, leaflets and posting information in library websites can be used to serve this purpose. Librarians should design information literacy programmes that should attract all categories of users, including senior citizens who rarely visited public libraries.
- Although 63 per cent of the respondents rated their IL skills as good, they did not seem to reflect the use of information resources because 59.7 per cent preferred to use printed information materials and 45.6 per cent of the users continued to seek assistance at the library counter. This could be due to the lack of computer literacy skills because they did not use the OPAC or Internet which required them to be computer literate.
- It was also evident that a majority of senior staff lacked interest or were rarely involved in IL programmes. This was a worrying trend because those who are reluctant should have been the leaders in the promotion of IL programmes.
- The researchers noted that more needed to be done to emphasize the use of information communication technologies to enable users to access the needed information. Of the respondents, 36.9 per cent indicated that the lack of adequate teaching equipment/facilities was one of the major challenges experienced followed by the lack of policy at 21.1 per cent. In all, 36.8 per cent of the respondents recommended that there was a need to increase computers for ease of access to online information sources, while 19.3 per cent suggested that the Internet bandwidth should be increased so that searching and retrieving is faster and, at the same time, to save time.

Recommendations

- All senior members of library staff should be involved in the provision of information literacy programmes in the public libraries.
- Staff should be trained on new trends in information and communication technologies and teaching skills.
- Training is important not only to enhance library staff's skills in delivering information literacy instruction but also to ease their fears when teaching the public.
- Public libraries' administrators and staff should ensure information literacy training programmes reach more people who are in need.
- The public libraries should build partnerships with local organizations to provide free information literacy training opportunities outside the libraries and people can attend information literacy training courses at community centres and career centres.
- The public libraries should structure a series of training workshops for the members of public on information literacy skills.
- The challenge of developing effective information literacy programmes for staff and the public requires continually funded support from the government.
- The library should add more OPAC terminals so that users can be able use them effectively without waiting for long.
- The library should acquire computers, both hardware and

software, to facilitate the implementation of information literacy.

- Adequate rooms for information literacy programmes should be provided.
- Bandwidth should be increased, so that users are able to access electronic resources effectively and efficiently.

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