

# Strengthening Information Literacy Interventions

Creative approaches to teaching and learning

SCECSAL Pre-Conference Seminar Report,  
5 December 2010, Gaborone, Botswana



## SCECSAL Pre-Conference Seminar Report



## **Strengthening Information Literacy Interventions**

*Using creative approaches to teaching and learning*

Gaborone, Botswana 5 December 2010



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## **About the organisations**

### **BLDS**

The British Library for Development Studies (BLDS), the library of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), contains the largest collection of economic and social development materials in Europe. This collection is unique in that over half originates from the global South; this has been made possible by BLDS' extensive global partnerships. BLDS is using this unique position to develop an information literacy programme with partners in a developing country context. This programme offers a radical departure from traditional classroom approaches with its emphasis on participatory learning, impact evaluation and assessing institutional capacity. The target audience includes information intermediaries, such as librarians, researchers, and development NGOs. The programme includes the co-development of a scalable, enquiry-based information capability programme; a monitoring and evaluation toolkit to measure the impact of information capability interventions; and regional workshops to share best practice approaches to stimulating demand for research knowledge. This report is on the latter of these.

### **ITOCA**

Information Training and Outreach Centre for Africa (ITOCA) is a capacity building organisation aimed at enhancing information and communications technology skills for librarians, information specialists, scientists, researchers and students in sub-Saharan Africa. ITOCA's main objective is to provide the research and academic communities with access to up-to-date and affordable scientific literature. Alongside this, ITOCA works at fuelling the demand side of information by developing the required skills needed to access it. ITOCA does this through running outreach programmes in information literacy; holding national training workshops and capacity building programmes; assisting partner institutions in developing information literacy programmes; and providing further technical support to already implemented programmes at participating institutions.



# 1. Executive summary

This report details the proceedings of a workshop focused on strengthening information literacy interventions – the ability to find and use information effectively – in a developing country context. The workshop took place on 5 December, 2010 at the University of Botswana, and focused mainly on current information literacy programmes taking place in an African context. The organisers of the conference – The Information Training and Outreach Centre for Africa (ITOCA) and BLDS (British Library for Development Studies, the library of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)) – believed this to be an opportune time to hold such a conference for a number of reasons. Information literacy has been gaining in interest in certain circles in African countries, but these circles have been somewhat small, mostly within libraries in higher education institutes and research institutes. Because of their mandate to support students’ and researchers’ information needs, university librarians in particular have had strong incentives to stay up to date with changes in the information landscape and know how to find and use information within it.

**“The continuous growth of high-quality research materials available online has made the importance of information literacy increasingly apparent”**

In recent years, however, the continuous growth of high-quality research materials available online has made the importance of information literacy increasingly apparent and, as a result, a growing number of institutions in Africa have been exploring ways to improve information literacy among their students, lecturers and researchers. Under the auspices of the DFID-funded Mobilising Knowledge for Development programme, BLDS has been developing an information literacy programme designed to stimulate the demand for research amongst development researchers and practitioners. More recently, BLDS has collaborated with ITOCA to develop a series of information literacy training courses and tools, and to investigate the strategic-level concerns of institutional embedding. This workshop was intended to contribute at the sectoral level, bringing together valuable experience and learning from a variety of information literacy initiatives throughout Africa. This workshop provided a forum, therefore, for academics, researchers, students and administrators to learn from each other’s work and to begin to develop some common approaches drawing on the lessons from this sharing.

This report is intended to document the sharing that took place in the conference. We hope that it can serve as a resource not only for librarians interested in developing information literacy initiatives, but also to help academics, administrators and senior leaders in institutions to participate in discussions about information literacy, and to better understand how they might benefit from stronger information literacy in their institutions. Thus the report also captures some of the main themes that emerged from this workshop. These were:

*Information literacy skills are indispensable to good research:* Most universities view high-quality research as central to their mission. Presentations and discussions throughout the day highlighted the relation between information literacy and the ability to produce such research. The oft-repeated truism that access to information is the single largest barrier confronting researchers in African universities was shown to be inaccurate (see Harle and Wella). The case

was also made for how strengthening information literacy of students and researchers helps build excellence throughout an institution and thus requires an institutional strategy (Fidzani, Oluka).

*Trainings should emphasise participation:* Another theme common to the day focused on the training approaches that are best suited to building information literacy skills. Many sessions touched on the need for participatory, student-centred approaches (see in particular Duvigneau and Chimwaza). A participatory approach ensures that learner needs are being met, and builds skills more quickly. In addition, participants were presented with tips on how to conduct effective training courses despite threats of poor connectivity and power outages.

*Integrated approach:* Research needs are often approached only from one angle at a time, without properly addressing the big picture and how the different parts fit together. For example, building the skills of researchers to search for materials online will have little impact if connectivity remains a problem. Similarly, without cultural or institutional incentives, researchers may continue to lack motivation to seek out the best, most up-to-date information, even if they are given the necessary skills and support.

**“The oft-repeated truism that access to information is the single largest barrier confronting researchers in African universities was shown to be inaccurate”**

The workshop concluded with a general agreement from participants that although this provided a valuable opportunity to share experiences and ideas on approaches to strengthening information literacy, more discussion and collaboration would be useful in building such programmes. As a response to this request, BLDS are working with African partners to develop an online information literacy network, creating tailored online resources, and developing replicable institutional strategies.



## 2. Introduction

Information literacy is a complicated matter. On the surface, it may seem a fairly simple and straightforward business of acquiring a set of skills and technologies that help guide one through today's information landscape. Just as a cook needs an oven, utensils and a recipe to bake a cake, so too does a researcher or student need equipment, an internet connection and a search strategy to find the right information for a particular enquiry. But a good cook will also bring to the kitchen an ability to make judgements about the suitability and proportion of certain ingredients, and so too does information literacy also involve the ability to weigh information from a range of sources and make judgements about its credibility, perspective and possible biases.

**"In order for meaningful change to come about, individual skills are only one piece of the puzzle"**

The field of information literacy is further complicated by the fact that building information literacy skills among individuals will rarely have any meaningful effect by itself. In order for meaningful change to come about, individual skills are only one piece of the puzzle, along with a range of others including availability of online materials, increased awareness, institutional incentives, ICT management and strong organisational support. As a result, far from simply being a skill set, information literacy is a concept charged with values, judgements and power dynamics, and thus subject to considerable controversy and debate.

This workshop, with the theme of *Strengthening Information Literacy Interventions: Using creative approaches to teaching and learning*, was held in order to look at the more practical sides of these and other issues surrounding information literacy in a particular context, namely within higher education and research institutes in Africa. Participants in this workshop represented institutions from 12 countries. They included librarians, professors, researchers and information specialists, all of whom had previous and current experiences with information literacy programmes in their institutions. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together an array of backgrounds and experience in the field as part of a wider effort to improve the effectiveness of information literacy programmes.

### 2.1 Why does information literacy matter?

But what exactly is meant by information literacy in the first place? What's so important about it? And if it really is so important, why is it so often pigeonholed as a matter for libraries and librarians? What are the implications of information literacy for an institution such as a university or research institute? What would a stronger emphasis on information literacy bring to such an institution, and what would this kind of emphasis look like in practice?

In 1989, the American Library Association settled on a definition for information literacy that has become widely used and accepted among professionals in the field: 'To be information literate, a person must be able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information'. The UK's Chartered Institute of



Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) defines it similarly as ‘knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner’.

These succinct and seemingly simple definitions have been unpacked by various institutions into different sets of skills, criteria and indicators, but however the concept is elaborated, at heart information literacy is about being competent and confident in making one’s way through today’s information landscape. Clearly then, information literacy is central to the mission of any institution engaged in education or research, and not just a matter for librarians. Because of the library’s position close to technological advances around information, however, it has historically been the library that has been most aware of the benefits than information literacy can confer on individuals and the institutions in which they work. But even though within their organisation libraries remain at the forefront of most information literacy projects, more and more of those involved in these projects have made it a stated goal to establish information literacy as an organisation-wide priority.

**“Clearly then, information literacy is central to the mission of any institution engaged in education or research, and not just a matter for librarians”**

As Mark Hepworth, the facilitator of the workshop, pointed out in his presentation, the context in which information literacy developments have taken place is changing. The definitions mentioned above mainly focus on skills at the level of the individual, and indeed the field of information literacy began with an emphasis on individual skills with little attention being paid to institutional or cultural contexts. As these contexts have received more attention, information literacy

approaches have come to place a greater emphasis on longer-term learning capabilities that are influenced by

**“Information literacy approaches have come to place a greater emphasis on longer-term learning capabilities that are influenced by institutional values around empowerment, participation, and choice”**

institutional values around empowerment, participation, and choice. We are now moving toward a greater appreciation of the political and cultural factors that complicate neat paradigms of how learning happens and encourage us to look at our work with more of a sociological eye.

## 2.2 Information literacy in an African context

One of the challenges common to those working on information literacy programmes in Africa is that many of these programmes are mostly fairly new – coming into being within the past decade or so – and consequently are still in the pioneering stages. There are thus few examples to look to in deciding what approaches and strategies might best be applied in an African context. But even where examples that might serve as guidance exist, there is still much to be done to share and compile experiences and lessons learned, and to begin to draw out some of the wider strategy implications that they hold for future efforts.

Over the past three years, the British Library for Development Studies (BLDS) at IDS has been developing information literacy programmes in Africa, and has thus been closely involved with many of these efforts. As part of the DFID-funded Mobilising Knowledge for Development programme, and working with African universities and research centres, it has developed toolkits, courses and approaches to information literacy that have been trialled as a part of this work. Likewise, ITOCA's focus since it was established in 1999 has been mostly on providing African institutions with training and other programme support for information packages like TEEAL, AGORA, HINARI and OARE, which are valuable resources for development knowledge in developing countries. This workshop thus brought together the experience of ITOCA, BLDS and their partners to consolidate their work on information literacy focusing on an African context.

## 2.3 Themes and recommendations

This workshop focused on three themes that institutions working on information literacy programmes have identified as areas that need further attention.

### 2.3.1 *Embedding information literacy programmes into institutions*

One of the strongest themes to emerge from this workshop was the need to develop strategies to embed information literacy programmes institution-wide, not just in libraries (Harle and Wella, Fidzani, Oluka, Akakandelwa and Mlambo all discussed this issue). An institutional approach not only fits with theoretical conceptions that take political and cultural dynamics into consideration, but is also important at a practical level. Most importantly, information literacy is key to raising institutional standards overall by improving the quality of research, teaching and learning, and thus is an institution-wide concern. It is clearly not just a matter of resources but also of making sure that information

literacy skills gained by individuals within an institution link up with the other components that go into producing high-quality teaching and research. For instance, having researchers able to search for

**“Information literacy is key to raising institutional standards overall by improving the quality of research, teaching and learning”**

information is not helpful if their access to research is constrained by limited connectivity or lack of awareness of available content. Similarly, improved access to information and better skills to search it will have little impact if there are no incentives – either from policy or institutional culture – to use it. By embedding information literacy campus-wide, different departments involved in ensuring research and educational excellence can work together with senior management to fit the different pieces together.

In the workshop, participants discussed the need for a better shared concept of embedding information literacy within institutions. Participants shared various components that were deemed to be important – such as making information literacy courses mandatory or integrating it into regular courses – but there was no agreement about what a model, or ‘gold standard’ of institutional embedding would look like. In analysing the challenges to embedding information literacy, participants agreed that researchers and lecturers do not fully appreciate how information literacy can improve the quality of their research and the competence of their students. While some participants felt that information literacy should be decentralised into a

responsibility for the academic staff to teach as part of the curriculum, others worried that this risked diluting the content, sacrificing quality and undermining what they identified as a key role for librarians.

Participants came up with a number of recommendations. One of the overarching ones was that in order to succeed, information literacy initiatives need to

**“Information literacy initiatives need to have stronger buy-in from professors, ICT staff and, in particular, members of senior management”**

have stronger buy-in from professors, ICT staff and, in particular, members of senior management who can champion the initiatives and make them a part of their overall institutional strategy (Fidzani, Mlambo). Participants recommended that information literacy programmes should start with the needs of students and academic staff/researchers, and look into ways to tailor the programmes to particular subjects. Overall, participants felt that more work needs to be done in African universities and research institutes on developing and implementing institution-wide strategies for information literacy.

### *2.3.2 Pedagogical innovation and assessment of information literacy trainings*

Some of the pedagogical challenges of teaching information literacy further illustrate the need for institution-wide approaches. For instance, one of the main problems often identified by librarians who are tasked with teaching information literacy is that most librarians do not come to their positions with teaching backgrounds. Meanwhile, those formally charged with teaching – professors and lecturers – do not have a mandate to teach information literacy. Somewhat surprisingly, many academics do not themselves possess adequate information skills, even when research is central to their work. And even when they are competent in information skills, it is often so ingrained from years of practice that they are unable to describe what they are doing, like trying to explain how to ride a bicycle. Other challenges related to the institutional context included the lack of importance accorded to information literacy because it is rarely tested, and the paucity of tools to assess the impact of information literacy programmes (see ‘pedagogy’ group discussion).

Aside from such institutional considerations, approaches and methods of teaching information literacy need to accommodate the increasing complexity with which the subject – as well as teaching and learning as a whole – is seen. The need for a participative, student-centred approach, and developing course materials and methods for it, has been central to the work of many of the workshop participants (Duvigneau and Chimwaza, Akakandelwa, Burnett). It was generally agreed that although such an approach was important, implementing it in an African context presented a formidable challenge as it went against a deeply ingrained formal, lecture-style approach (‘pedagogy’ group discussion). Participants recommended that, depending on the approach that different institutions wish to take, they should make teaching skills part of the training of librarians to strengthen their capacity to teach information literacy. Another possibility, although more contentious among participants, would be to extend the mandate of teaching information literacy to the academic staff. Other recommendations included building robust and context-appropriate tools for measuring impact, making information a mandatory and examinable course, and generally working more closely with lecturers to ensure that their needs, and the needs of students, are being met (‘pedagogy’ group discussion).

### *2.3.3 Use of new technologies in information literacy*

Although information literacy encompasses a wide range of skills, it has always been closely tied to technological changes, how they impact the information landscape, and how information users can benefit from them. Participants at the workshop represented institutions with varying availability and use of new technologies, and thus different needs in terms of new technologies and maximising those that they already have. In some cases, new technologies can be used to leapfrog or supplement existing ones that underperform due to infrastructure bottleneck or other reasons. Mobile phone technology is perhaps the main example of this. While access to computers with internet connections remains low in much of Africa, usage of mobile phones is high. And although large undersea cables have brought the potential for greater internet speeds in many African countries, for now, sending information through mobile networks is cheaper and access is greater. In some cases, existing technologies like videos can be employed in new ways to engage training participants (Burnett). Other technological innovations, such as gaming technologies, may be useful in building information literacy through interfaces that better engage younger users (de Kock).

Participants recommended that those currently involved in information literacy efforts need to work closely with technical experts in a coordinated way to be aware of new, relevant technologies and to ensure that technology is used appropriately as a part of comprehensive solutions and not simply for its own sake or the prestige it may confer. Specific recommendations included developing content for information literacy teaching in different platforms – such as online and mobile – and in different modes of delivery such as games.

## **2.4 Looking forward**

The workshop highlighted the need for continued efforts and sharing of those efforts among stakeholders in information literacy initiatives. The contributions that participants made in the workshop reflected the large amount of work and thought that have already gone into strengthening information literacy in higher education institutions in Africa. But much remains to be done, especially in the areas of building the capacity of individuals and institutions to design and implement information literacy programmes. The workshop made clear that challenges abound but that greater collaboration in the future to define good practices, strategies and approaches will go a long way toward overcoming them. For, in the end, information literacy is not just about producing better research or writing better reports, but about people everywhere using information to take control of their futures.

### 3. Seminar programme

#### **Strengthening Information Literacy Interventions: Using creative approaches to teaching and learning**

#### **SCECSAL Pre-Conference Seminar**

#### *Venue, time and organisation*

Date:	Sunday 5 December 2010
Duration	9.00am – 4.30pm
Venue:	University of Botswana, Gaborone
Participants:	53 participants with an interest in information literacy in Africa
Organised by:	IDS UK, ITOCA South Africa

#### *Programme*

<b>09.00am</b>	<b>Welcome and registration</b>
09.15am	Welcoming remarks: Introductions, seminar objectives and outcomes <b>Jon Gregson</b> , Director, Mobilising Knowledge for Development, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK
09.30am	The context: <b>Dr Mark Hepworth</b> , Senior Lecturer, Department of Information Science, Loughborough University, UK

<b>SESSION 1: Information literacy, capacity building and governance</b>	
<b>Chair:</b> Dr Mark Hepworth	
<i>Format: Four 15–20 minute presentations followed by a five-minute questions and answers session after each presentation.</i>	
09.45am	<b>Availability, access and use: Re-understanding the e-journal problem</b>  Speakers: <b>Jonathan Harle</b> , Programme Officer (Research and Libraries), Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), UK; <b>Kondwani Wella</b> , College Librarian, Kamuzu College of Nursing, University of Malawi, Malawi



10:10am	<p><b>Building searching skills using learner-centred approaches in an African context</b></p> <p>Speakers: <b>Siobhan Duvigneau</b>, Information Literacy Manager, British Library for Development Studies (IDS), UK; <b>Gracian Chimwaza</b>, Director, Information Training Outreach Centre for Africa (ITOCA), South Africa</p>
10:35am	<p><b>Building capacity: Lessons learnt from an intensive health information training programme in Vietnam</b></p> <p>Speaker: <b>Peter Burnett</b>, Head of Library Development, International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), UK</p>
11.00am	<p><b>An institutional approach to embedding information literacy programmes across the curriculum: University of Botswana case study.</b></p> <p>Speaker: <b>Babakisi Fidzani</b>, Deputy Director of Library Services, University of Botswana, Botswana</p>

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**Morning Break: 11:25am – 11:55am**

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**SESSION 2: Strengthening developing countries' capacity in information literacy**

**Chair:** Julie Brittain

*Format: Panel discussion, the session will conclude with questions and comments from the floor.*

**Order of panellists:**

- Dr Silas Oluka , DELPHe project/University of Botswana and Copperbelt, Botswana
- Dr Akakandelwa Akakandelwa, University of Zambia, Zambia
- Elizabeth Mlambo, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe
- Siobhan Duvigneau, Institute of Development Studies, UK
- Bettie de Kock, University of Pretoria, South Africa

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**Lunch 1.15pm – 2.30pm**

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**SESSION 3: Innovations changing the landscape of information skills building**

**Chair:** Dr Mark Hepworth

*Format: Three working group discussions, the activity will conclude with a feedback session from each group.*

2.30pm	<p><b>GROUP A: Pedagogical innovation and assessment of training (pre- and post-assessment)</b></p> <p>Facilitators: Siobhan Duvigneau, IDS; Professor Bamidele Fawole, ITOCA</p>
	<p><b>GROUP B: Use of new technologies in information literacy</b></p> <p>Facilitators: Jon Gregson, IDS; Michael Chimalizeni, ITOCA</p>
	<p><b>GROUP C: Embedding information literacy programmes into institutions</b></p> <p>Facilitators: Julie Brittain, IDS; Jonathan Harle, ACU</p>

**SESSION 4: Closing Session**

**Chair:** Dr Mark Hepworth

*Format: Plenary activity, discussion and feedback.*

3.45pm	Summary of findings from the three groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open discussion</li><li>• Summary presentation</li><li>• Closing</li></ul>
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**Close 4.30pm – Refreshments (coffee and tea)**

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## 4. Welcoming remarks – Jon Gregson

The opening remarks were delivered by Jon Gregson, head of the Knowledge Services department at IDS and director of the Mobilising Knowledge for Development programme.

### 4.1 Overview of IDS

Jon began with a general introduction to IDS as a whole, followed by an overview of the programme through which IDS's current information literacy work is taking place.

The Institute of Development Studies is home to five research teams focusing on these themes:

- Globalisation
- Governance
- Knowledge, Technology and Society
- Participation, Power and Social Change
- Vulnerability and Poverty Reduction

In addition to its research agenda, IDS is also a centre of academic excellence, with a large postgraduate programme of MAs and research DPhils, which accepts about 150 students per year.

### 4.2 Mobilising knowledge for development (MK4D)

IDS's current work on information literacy, including this seminar, is being carried out through a programme called Mobilising Knowledge for Development (MK4D), funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). Launched in 2009, this programme brings together the resources of three units within IDS – Knowledge Services, BLDS and Impact and Learning – to develop demand-led approaches to knowledge sector development work. This emphasis on the demand side of knowledge work, Jon pointed out, is a shift from the traditional supply-driven paradigm of development research and information flows. This means a greater emphasis on co-production of knowledge and the platforms and distribution channels of that research. Most importantly, it entails increasing collaboration and partnerships around new development initiatives.

The key components of this programme are:

- Co-production of knowledge: developing partner relationships to address gaps and barriers in the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge.
- Developing technologies: by opening up information through various networks and platforms for knowledge-sharing, for example open application programme interface (API) and possibly open licensing.
- Increasing and improving demand for knowledge: IDS's information literacy work comes under this component, a result of its learning with partners from previous programmes

that many development actors are often either unaware of or unable to find and effectively use available information relevant to their needs.

Jon welcomed everyone to the seminar and thanked the organisers, ITOCA and IDS, and closed by challenging participants to mobilise and take action together.

## 5. The context – Mark Hepworth

Mark Hepworth, from Loughborough University, delivered the keynote address outlining the context of information literacy. Mark's presentation addressed three generations of approaches to and thinking about information literacy over the past decades.

### 5.1 Where have we come from?

We are coming from high levels of information learning where the focus was traditionally on individual knowledge/skill. This context was characterised by:

- generalised, high-level theoretical models used by organisations such as UNESCO, ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) and SCOUNL (Society of College, National and University Libraries);
- developed mainly from a higher education context;
- focus on skills in isolation without tying them together holistically;
- an overemphasis on technical ability rather than the culture of information literacy.

### 5.2 Where are we now?

We are now in a context characterised by the following high-level drivers:

- increased emphasis on the value of people's capabilities – as part of organisations or as independent learners;
- a growing association with empowerment, choice, participation, governance and democracy;
- the desire for more people to take advantage of higher education – often coming from non-traditional backgrounds;
- the need to cope with a rapidly changing environment

We are still grappling with challenges around institutional capacity, infrastructure and resources. Whilst some of these challenges are beyond the scope of the librarian to resolve, there is room for librarians to influence their institutions, for example on issues of capacity development.

Our ideas about information literacy are changing:

- We realise the difficulty of getting people to be information literate, but because our relationship with information is largely instinctive, unconscious and socially defined, we often find it difficult to explain to others.
- Information literacy is now recognised not simply as a discrete skills set, but as a culture.
- Learning is a 'messy', iterative and complex business – neat models don't resonate with the learner.



- Its content is dependent on different contexts: school, university, the workplace, the community.

### 5.3 Where are we going?

There is now a greater realisation of the complexity of how people learn and an appreciation of the need to learn about how to teach information literacy. There is also greater understanding of the contextual nature of information literacy – for example cultural norms and practices can strengthen or inhibit information literacy.

Thus information literacy is moving in the following directions:

- the use of a greater range of methods to engage with learners, e.g. participative approaches, games;
- working in partnerships;
- working with the community;
- towards a highly specific, context-driven, integrated teaching and learning – based on good pedagogy;
- interpreting information literacy more holistically, moving towards information and knowledge management capabilities;
- researching information literacy in different contexts, specific processes, different methods of teaching;
- better ways of understanding and measuring impact.

**“Cultural norms and practices can strengthen or inhibit information literacy”**

## 6. Presentation summaries

### 6.1 Availability, access and use: Re-understanding the e-journal problem

– Jonathan Harle and Kondwani Wella

Jonathan Harle from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and Kondwani Wella from the University of Malawi delivered this presentation based on research conducted by Jon and funded by Arcadia. The research involved surveys, interviews and discussions at four African higher education institutions: University of Malawi (Chancellor College); University of Nairobi; National University of Rwanda; University of Dar es Salaam.

**“Availability of scholarly journals in Africa is actually very good”**

This research was designed to look at problems surrounding the use of journals in African higher education institutions. Without relevant up-to-date journals, researchers cannot conduct their research, lecturers cannot update their teaching materials, and students cannot produce good assignments. It is a generally held belief that low usage of the latest journals at African universities is because researchers and students do not have access to them.

Results from the research revealed that availability of scholarly journals in Africa is actually very good, with 83 per cent of the top 20 journals in 15 subjects – 300 journals – being available at the four institutes through the major access schemes such as PERii and Research4Life.

Through the research it was realised that the real challenge is that of translating availability into use. The following barriers were identified which can prevent this from happening:

#### *Technology/connectivity*

- Still a problem although it is being addressed by laying undersea high-capacity data transmission cables connecting sub-Saharan Africa.

#### *Skills and knowledge*

- Librarians and others are training users in online skills, demand is high and resources are limited.
- Delivering e-resources requires ICT skills and understanding of research. Do librarians have the ICT skills they need? Can they work with people who do? Can libraries develop a good web presence? Do librarians know the strength of their collections? Do librarians know the content specification of their e-resources?
- Librarians need to be more alert to trends in how users access information, for example some are pushing for more desktops in the library but more students have laptops and staff have desktops in their offices.

- There is a need for more effective bandwidth management and optimisation. Institutions often push for and pay large sums of money for increased bandwidth without first cleaning out the technological cobwebs clogging up their systems (for instance, by installing virus-checking software).

### *Awareness of journals*

- Researchers are often unaware of the resources that are available to them.
- A survey of academics and postgraduate students identified 373 e-journal titles which were thought to not be available at institutional level. Of these 373, 270 were available, making it clear that the problem was lack of awareness of availability of journal titles not the availability itself.
- Possible reasons for lack of awareness include: empty shelves leading students to assume unavailability; lack of access; reliance on Google and not discovering the subscription content; underdeveloped or lack of library websites/portals; inability to recognise the difference between scholarly and popular content.

**“Researchers are often unaware of the resources that are available to them”**

### *People*

- Library leadership is critical in moving libraries forward, to inspiring and motivating staff to develop long-term strategies, to working with new ideas and new ways of working and reach out and market.

### *Relationships*

- Librarians need to engage beyond the library, collaborate with librarians, researchers and ICT professionals, make the case for the library, learn about users’ needs, develop informal networks with academics, students and senior managers and engage researchers working with librarians

### *Institutional context*

- Policies, processes and politics within the institution influence the context and ultimately have a bearing on the usage of available resources.

The presenters concluded with a summary of the following major drivers of change that need to be driven by librarians and by senior managers. These were:

### *Librarians*

- understanding research;
- re-establishing their relevance;
- responding to users’ needs and tailoring responses to particular academic disciplines;
- changing peoples’ perceptions of what librarians can do.

## *Senior managers*

- developing strategic and policy frameworks;
- investing in libraries *and* in librarians;
- librarians need to work with managers to achieve this.

## 6.2 Building searching skills using learner-centred approaches in an African context – Siobhan Duvigneau and Gracian Chimwaza

Siobhan Duvigneau from the British Library of Development Studies (BLDS) at IDS and Gracian Chimwaza from the Information Training and Outreach Centre for Africa (ITOCA) made a presentation on their collaborative work developing training courses. These courses were targeted at researchers, academics and librarians to promote and improve their use of Research4Life products such as HINARI, AGORA and OARE.

### *Methodology*

Below is a summary of the highlights of the methodology used:

#### 1. Three-pronged approach

- focus on developing a ‘learner-centred’ approach to information literacy training;
- focus on development of searching strategies and techniques;
- focus on developing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approach to help training design.

#### 2. Learner-centred model – a training methodology in which the process is directed by the learner to address their needs.

*‘Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn’*

- participative learning;
- group work: sharing experiences and learning (during tasks and in feedback);
- practise skills with support;
- trainer as facilitator;
- self-directed;
- memorable;
- evidence from monitoring this approach shows a significant increase in acquisition of skills compared to more traditional methods.

### *Search skills*

The subject matter of the training is ‘Search Skills’. These skills are critical for conducting effective research using computer-based knowledge systems. The methodology used in the teaching incorporates the following:

- scenario-based research;
- searching techniques to comprehend brief (mind-mapping);
- building up picture of information landscape;
- developing a ‘search strategy’;
- purposeful interaction with development tools.

### *Content*

The course aims to give participants a good understanding of:

- mind-mapping;
- concept clustering;
- building search tables;
- combining terms;
- boolean operators and phrase searching;
- truncation and word stems;
- limits (field searching);
- controlled terms.

**“Now I can impart these skills and improve their student experiences... as well as my own”**

### *Outcome for participants*

Participants benefit from the following:

- context-based learning;
- greater engagement with products;
- increased awareness of importance and benefits of developing a ‘search strategy’;
- targeted search skills and knowing how to recover from ‘too-much’ or ‘too-little’;
- raised awareness of product usefulness and raised ability to assist others with research.

Feedback from course participants was positive. A comment from one Nigerian academic is representative:

‘These skills are important to me because in the past I haven’t been able to teach or advise my students on how to conduct effective research, now I can impart these skills and improve their student experiences... as well as my own.’



## 6.3 Building capacity: Lessons learnt from an intensive health information training programme in Vietnam – Peter Burnett

### *Overview*

INASP, the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, supports capacity building in the university and research sector by strengthening the production, access to and dissemination of scholarly information and knowledge.

In the past few years INASP has been involved in the following programmes in Vietnam:

- workshops on online health information (i.e. national workshops that train participants to conduct similar trainings at their home institutions);
- growth of e-resources (Vietnam has access to a strong collection of e-resources, but these were underused);
- changing role of library staff and vision of local partner.

Despite lots of training initiatives, more training programmes are often being requested, leading INASP to investigate whether they could develop a more sustainable model. As a result, INASP decided to partner with the following organisations to develop a new kind of programme:

- Hanoi School of Public Health, Vietnam
- International Network for Online Resources and Materials [INFORM], Sweden
- Atlantic Philanthropies, who jointly funded the programmes with INASP.

The main goal of the programme was to change the information culture at practitioner level through an intensive national-level approach.

### *Approach and process*

The following are the key features of the programme which influenced its success:

#### *Proposal*

- Prospective participants from ten key institutions were invited to apply for two master trainer places from each institution.

#### *Partnering*

- worked with a local partner;
- worked with the Health Ministry;
- obtained institutional commitment from the ten key institutions.

### *Selection*

- Commitment meetings were held with institutional senior management and memoranda of understanding (MoU) were signed.
- Potential master trainers had to be nominated, and then they needed to apply and attend face-to-face interviews for selection.

### *Opening ceremony*

- A formal opening ceremony was held to mark the launch of the programme.
- The programme was directly supported by the Vice-Minister of Health.

### *Curriculum (master trainers' workshops)*

- The curriculum was reviewed (separate simultaneous peer reviews).
- Training others and proactive librarianship was emphasised.
- Involved using online information resources.
- Team-building, pedagogical skills and presentation skills were also incorporated into the programme.
- Mentoring was integrated into the programme.
- A customised workshop was run to address specific local needs.

### *Use of video*

- Video recordings of all participants' introductions, self-reflection and peer reviews were made and presented to students. This improved participants' confidence and helped build their capacity.

### *Practical application*

- Each master trainer is required to deliver at least four regional workshops within a year.

### *Evaluation*

- An independent consultant was used to conduct the evaluation.
- Evaluation is currently ongoing via survey, visits and interviews with master trainers, partners and vice-rectors of participating institutions.

### ***Key success factors***

The following factors were key to the success of the programme:

- securing a local partner
- obtaining both institutional and individual commitment;

- incorporating pedagogy and proactive librarianship alongside increased subject knowledge;
- use of local and international mentors.

## 6.4 An institutional approach to embedding information literacy programmes across the curriculum: University of Botswana case study – Babakisi Fidzani

Babakisi Fidzani, Deputy Director of Library Services at the University of Botswana, presented on efforts to embed information literacy programmes across their university curriculum. The university is offering two General Education Courses (GEC) incorporating information literacy, and there is high-level support for development of information literacy skills in the University of Botswana, as they are considered essential for achieving the university’s major goals and vision.

When the university conducted a major strategic review and formulated its strategy for the year 2016, six priority areas were identified. The following three were the most relevant for information literacy:

- providing relevant and high-quality programmes;
- intensifying research performance;
- improving the student experience.

**“Information literacy now enjoys the highest-level support at the University of Botswana from the Vice-Chancellor and the Senate”**

These self-introspection exercises helped the university realise the importance of information literacy, and the facilitation of learning process by librarians was seen as an enabler of learning.

Driven by external factors (employability strategy, information explosion and information literacy international trends), as well as internal factors (Senate recommendations on GEC, quality of student learning, and the role of the library in learning, teaching and research) the university made progress in advancing information literacy as follows:

- Information literacy started as unscheduled bibliographic instruction.
- Information literacy is now part of General Education Courses 121 and 122 on Computing and Information Skills at the University of Botswana.
- Course and assignment work is linked to information literacy and arranged between academic staff and librarians. Not integrated in the courses as yet.
- The ongoing Development Partnerships in Higher Education (DePHE) project is seen as an opportunity to realise the University of Botswana’s aspirations on information literacy.

Information literacy now enjoys the highest-level support at the University of Botswana from the Vice-Chancellor and the Senate. This was achieved through lobbying the relevant authorities

and enabling them to realise that information literacy skills were a prerequisite for the university to produce high-quality graduates and achieve its mission and vision.

The development of information literacy integration at the University of Botswana is expected to be accelerated by the funding received through the DelPHE project, which is focused on the transformation of the role of the library, its staff and academic colleagues. The DelPHE goal is to foster a holistic engagement with the university's role and responsibility in quality student-centred learning, teaching and research. The approach being employed involves integrating information literacy across course design and implementation. The University of Botswana has partnered with Copperbelt University as part of DelPHE project requirements.

The starting point of the DelPHE project was a baseline study to establish the University of Botswana community's perceptions towards teaching, learning and research. This has already been completed. An advocacy plan was formulated to ensure buy-in from the drivers of learning and teaching policy, including:

- departmental-level staff;
- strategic partners;
- Centre for Academic Development;
- Teaching and Learning Unit;
- ILS Reference Group;
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Affairs (DVC AA);
- Academic Affairs Deans Management Team (AADMT).

To date, the University of Botswana has completed a baseline study and is satisfied with the responses which have been analysed and have been incorporated into a draft report. The report highlighted priority areas and is being used to plan the way forward.

## 6.5 Summaries of panellists' presentations

Five panellists delivered short presentations, each followed by open plenary discussions. The theme of the discussion was: *Strengthening developing countries' capacity in information literacy*. Julie Brittain, head of the British Library for Development Studies at IDS, chaired this session.

### 6.5.1 Dr Silas Oluka

Silas Oluka's presentation focused on the DelPHE project at the University of Botswana, summarising the results of the information literacy baseline survey conducted by the university.

The results of the survey are summarised in the table below:

Theme	Element	Staff (%)		Students (%)	
		Imp	Sat	Imp	Sat
Information literacy definition	Ability to access needed info	89.7	65.3	81.1	58.6
	Effective use of info to accomplish specific purposes	92	74.1	81.2	65.8
Information literacy in the curriculum	Integrated in all courses to inform student learning	80.8	46.7	70.6	53.5
	Competencies in students fostered to value authenticity of info	77.9	34.4	70.7	64.8
Information literacy in learning and teaching experiences	Assist students to critically evaluate info sources	64.3	31	71.4	57.2
	Facilitate synthesis of info at abstract level	71.7	31.7	80.4	53.3
Institutional context and support	UB structures understand ethical and legal issues underpinning information literacy and ICT	64.4	36.5	73.6	54.3
	UB develops and preserves integrity of information literacy resources	70	39.7	79.5	62.8

*Key: Imp – Important; Sat – Satisfactory; UB – University of Botswana*

*Source: Dr S. Oluka (University of Botswana)*

Below is a summary of the conclusions drawn from analysing the survey results:

- There is a convergence of understanding about what information literacy means conceptually.
- Staff and student feedback show significant gaps in information literacy presence in curriculum and learning and teaching contexts.
- There appear to be specific areas of information literacy that present problems that could impact institutional quality expectations.
- Operational frameworks and strategies will be required to address institutional goals.

### **6.5.2 Dr Akakandelwa Akakandelwa – Status of information literacy in Zambia**

Dr Akakandelwa delivered a presentation on the status of information literacy in Zambia, based mainly on the results of a questionnaire conducted to assess the current status of information literacy in higher institutions of learning, colleges and research institutions in Zambia.

The questionnaire was completed by participants at the information literacy strategic planning workshop for librarians, researchers and academics in Lusaka, co-funded by INASP and BLDS, and jointly facilitated by Dr Akakandelwa from the University of Zambia and Siobhan Duvigneau from BLDS, 16–18 August 2010.

## *Findings*

In summary the findings from the survey were as follows:

- Most institutions offer only library orientation programmes.
- These orientation programmes are poorly attended, conducted in a hurry, ineffective and do not provide students with adequate information literacy skills.
- Only two institutions offer information literacy courses which are embedded in the Communication Skills Course.
- Only in one case, at the Copperbelt University, is the course examined.
- One institution offers *ad hoc* short courses on demand.
- The main modes of delivery of the information literacy programmes are:
  - face-to-face instruction;
  - lectures;
  - tutorials;
  - demonstrations.
- Institutions do not adopt any information literacy standards.
- Information literacy is mainly offered by library staff; in a few cases it is offered by academic faculty.

## *Challenges*

Institutions in Zambia face the following challenges in provision of information literacy:

- lack of strategic plans for information literacy;
- inadequate ICT infrastructure;
- lack of human resources trained in information literacy;
- lack of management support;
- lack of funds.

## *Current information literacy activities:*

- Information Literacy Workshops
  - Information Literacy Workshop for Librarians, Researchers and Academicians in Institutions of Higher Education, Colleges and Research in Zambia, 16–18 August 2010;
  - Information Literacy Workshop for Zambian Parliamentary Staff, September 2010.
- CBU Project.

- The University of Zambia (UNZA) Information Literacy Centre
  - Written a position paper on the establishment of an information literacy centre;
  - Construction of the centre has started (two labs);
  - Sourcing funds and equipment.

### *Future plans*

- training in pedagogical skills;
- training in curricula design;
- promoting collaboration among higher education and research institutions in information literacy programmes;
- developing an information literacy forum;
- putting information literacy on the Zambia Library Association Agenda;
- integration of information literacy into curricula and course assignments;
- introduce information literacy courses at undergraduate and graduate levels.

### **6.5.3 Elizabeth Mlambo – Information literacy at the University of Zimbabwe**

Elizabeth Mlambo delivered a presentation on the state of information literacy at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ). In her summary she indicated that UZ had made significant progress in information literacy as it has been taught to students by librarians as an examinable course since 2004. There is an appreciation of the importance of information literacy as well as developments supporting it, such as installation of a computer networking infrastructure.

Elizabeth gave the following details as background information on the University of Zimbabwe:

- established in 1957;
- 10 faculties;
- 14,000 students;
- automated library system – Millennium;
- one main library and seven branch libraries;
- 100 library staff;
- one computer laboratory for training purposes;
- digital collections (e-theses, exams online, institutional repository);
- 2004 launch of information literacy programme (now examinable).

**“UZ had made significant progress in information literacy as it has been taught to students by librarians as an examinable course since 2004”**

While in the past user education was mainly confined to the library, the situation has changed significantly. The changes were initiated as part of the university’s strategic initiative to emphasise IT competency. This initiative also brought about the following developments:

- Information literacy was embedded in the curriculum in 2004.
- Information literacy was integrated with the Communication Skills course in the Linguistics Department.

- Information literacy became an examinable course, with 30 per cent of the information literacy course making up the final Communication Skills course mark.
- Two assignments and an exam are given at the end of the semester.

The information literacy course content is as follows:

- effective use of the Open Access Catalogue (OPAC);
- access, retrieval, evaluation and synthesis of information;
- access to e-resources such as e-journals and e-theses;
- formulating search strategies;
- use of the internet and search engines;
- referencing and citation.

### *Challenges*

- The enrolment figures are too high for the limited resources.
- The venues cannot accommodate the large information literacy classes.
- There is a limited number of computers, which have to be shared, often by four students per machine.
- There are too few teaching staff per student; for instance, lecturers run five information literacy classes a week, despite having their own classes to run.
- The Linguistics Department, which teaches communication skills, wants to teach some of the components of information literacy. While this is an indicator of the programme's success, vigilance is needed to ensure that standards are maintained throughout the different departments.
- Lecturers do not always have computers in their offices nor feel that information literacy is important.
- Not all the labs are connected to generators which is a problem when there is no power.

### *Future plans*

- There are plans to revisit the information literacy syllabus in line with new technological advancements.
- Increase transfer speed (we started with a transfer speed of two megabits, we now have a speed of 25 megabits).
- A wireless internet connectivity is currently being installed.
- New computers are to be added.

### *New developments in information literacy*

- Perception has changed, there is now greater appreciation by staff and students, including postgraduates.
- Student attendance is steadier.
- Access to electronic resources is increasing.
- There is continued support from the university authorities.



#### 6.5.4 Siobhan Duvigneau – *Tips to mitigate against training disasters*

Siobhan Duvigneau, from IDS, delivered this presentation aimed at preparing for the inevitable situation where one has to conduct training when there is loss of electrical power.

The presenter indicated that this occurrence is very common in sub-Saharan Africa, quoting estimates from ITOCA that their trainers encounter this situation at least 60 per cent of the time when conducting training in the region.

The following are the *Ten Top Tips for Mitigating against Training Disasters*.

1. Powered-up laptops
  - It is advisable to have laptops with batteries fully charged when training starts and to ensure that you have plenty of plugs and sockets for connectivity.
2. Offline posters
  - These are laminated print posters of the different online pages used during a presentation, available should the computer lose power or connectivity.
  - Can be used in an interactive way, for instance by simulating the user's journey through different pages or search functions.
  - Participants can use these when conducting their own training sessions back at their institutions.
3. CD-ROM versions of online materials that can be used when there are connectivity problems
  - Can be used when there is no internet connectivity loss.
  - Can contain screen shots that can be used offline.
4. Props
  - Such as looking at hard copies of journals to demonstrate how to evaluate a journal's credibility, or using a macro-thesaurus to explain how librarians classify subjects.
5. Workbooks/worksheets – containing various exercises and activities to reinforce key concepts and skills.
6. Activities
  - Participatory activities may be used in appropriate circumstances. For example when teaching Boolean operators one could divide participants into categories based on certain criteria and then use different combinations to demonstrate the use of Boolean operators.
7. Reflections
  - Participants can reflect on, or review, the material previously covered even when there is a power failure.
8. Review quizzes
  - Quizzes and competitions, especially for teams of students, can be engaging.
9. Team building/refresher activities
  - Can be conducted when there is a loss of power.
10. Scenarios, debates
  - Can be held for appropriate topics such as 'should you use Facebook to promote your research?'

In closing, Siobhan emphasised that although in some cases of power outage or connectivity loss, facilitators can improvise solutions, it is far more effective to be prepared for such likely occurrences with these or similar tools and activities.

**“In some cases of power outage or connectivity loss, facilitators can improvise solutions, it is far more effective to be prepared for such likely occurrences”**

### ***6.5.5 Bettie de Kock – Demonstration of a virtual reality game for information literacy education***

Bettie de Kock demonstrated a virtual reality game that has been designed and implemented at the University of Pretoria in South Africa to assist in the education of students in information literacy. The authors of the game embedded Isenberg’s six information literacy skills into the game.

In this game the player is represented by an avatar which goes on a learning journey which starts with meeting a professor who instructs the student to write a report on Event Management and the World Cup. The player then goes to a computer and learns a skill, and is then given a test through carefully simulated scenarios. For instance, the player learns how to search the library catalogue through searching for information in a shopping mall. There is also an exercise on completing an assignment conducted in a construction yard setting. Here the student learns how to layout an assignment (cover page through reference list). The reason for such scenarios, deliberately chosen from disparate areas, is to ensure the player gains skills applicable not just in a library setting but in everyday life.

The university library layout is re-created in the programme. Another task asks the player to locate required information in the library. The player must find the right book on the shelf, before proceeding to the circulation counter. Here she learns the difference between magazines and academic journals, and then has to arrange them on the shelf.

In addition to this, a writing assignment helps the student to learn about concepts such as plagiarism, clarity, etc. in a dormitory room setup.

# 7. Roundtable group discussions

Participants broke into groups to discuss challenges and recommendations in 3 areas:

- Group 1 Pedagogical innovation and assessment of training (pre- and post-assessment)

The group focused on: how information skills are defined within institutions; recent changes in pedagogy; the different types of information literacy trainings, including a look at problem areas; and on whether library staff are sufficiently trained to deliver training and how their training programmes are being assessed.

- Group 2 Use of new technologies in information literacy

This group focused on: the new technological changes that had been made and their effects; the merits of different types of technological initiatives; and problem areas, and solutions, when adopting new technologies. The group made recommendations for managing technical platforms.

- Group 3 Embedding information literacy programmes into institutions

Group 3 looked at how much, and what type, of institutional support is given to information literacy programmes; examined factors and efforts that helped obtain, or hinder, institutional support; and discussed whether participants' institutions were running institutionally embedded programmes or a one-off orientation.

The following is a summary of the reports delivered by representatives from the groups after finishing the group exercise.

## 7.1 Pedagogical innovation and assessment of training

The group identified the following challenges and proposed recommendations encountered in teaching and assessing information literacy training.

### 7.1.1 Challenges

- Limited resources: there is the challenge of libraries coping with increasing demand for information literacy skills while operating on limited resources.
- Student time restraints: time is limited and in many cases librarians are competing with lecturers for students' time.
- Lack of teaching skills: librarians often lack the necessary skills for teaching information literacy.
- Lack of incentives: in many institutions information literacy courses are not examined and therefore suffer from poor attendance.
- Poor timing of information literacy interventions: information literacy concepts are often introduced early in the student's life at university through a one-off orientation

programme. However, students are not always able to fully appreciate the importance of information literacy at this early stage.

### 7.1.2 Recommendations

- Use new technologies: there is a need to adopt distance learning combined with new technology to reach large numbers of students at a lower cost. Suggested technologies include: mobile phones, social media tools (e.g. Facebook and Twitter), Web 2.0 tools, radio, and well-equipped community centres used as telecentres.
- Build librarians' teaching skills: more skilled librarians should train their peers. In addition, librarians too may benefit from attending courses to acquire the required skills.
- Cooperation between librarians and lecturers: librarians should work with lecturers and adopt teaching methods that appeal to students.
- Institutional buy-in: there is a need to convince and get 'buy-in' from the highest authorities (e.g. principals).
- Better timing: to reinforce skills and ensure that their relevance is understood, information literacy should be introduced with a 'just-in-time' approach. That is, aspects of information literacy should be taught just when students need them for their assignments.
- Adopting measurable indicators: there is a need to place emphasis on measurable quality indicators. Various assessment tools exist, and it is the trainer's responsibility to determine which tools are most appropriate for their contexts, and how they could be adopted.

## 7.2 Use of new technologies in information literacy

This group discussed the overall context of technologies in their institutions, following which they identified challenges and made recommendations.

The institutions represented were at different levels of advancement in the adoption and application of information and communication technology (ICT). Some institutions are relying purely on manual systems, while others have varying degrees of automation by implementing library systems such as Mandarin, Koha and Opal. Despite these differences, there is a general readiness to use new technologies across the board. Almost all the institutions represented were at least trying out some of the new media to reach their users, including use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Glogster. Some institutions are also using Podcasts and at least one institution is piloting glogs (online posters via [www.glogster.com](http://www.glogster.com)). A well-equipped mobile library bus is another technological innovation in use at one institution.

**"Almost all the institutions represented were at least trying out some of the new media to reach their users, including use of social media such Facebook, Twitter and Glogster"**

### 7.2.1 Challenges

- Technology fix mentality: some institutions have the default position that technology, regardless of its merits, is the solution to any problem. This leads to rash decisions on implementation when problems lie elsewhere.
- Technology implemented in isolation: only a few of the institutions represented had adopted technology in a systematic, coherent and strategic manner for the purpose of teaching information literacy.
- Changing technological context: there are more mobile phones per capita in developing countries than personal computers, including laptops, yet most information literacy interventions focus on the latter.

### 7.2.2 Recommendations

- Interventions to reflect changing context: more information literacy interventions should focus on mobile phones due to their prevalence in the developing world.
- Adopt holistic and institution-wide approaches: universities should develop information literacy policies that are incorporated as part of wider institutional strategy, rather than as narrow *ad hoc* approaches.
- Develop a balanced skill set – Librarians should work on developing a skill-set that balances technological proficiency and human skills (hi-touch and hi-tech).
- Adopt institutional standards: institutions should set standards for technology to ensure high quality of performance.
- Improved librarian and user relationships: librarians need to be in touch with their users in order to understand and meet them at their point of need. This understanding is crucial when implementing new technology if it is to be tailored to meet user needs.

## 7.3 Embedding information literacy programmes into institutions

This group first analysed the wider organisational context of information literacy at their respective institutions. They then went on to identify a set of challenges and institutions.

Among those involved in information literacy efforts in institutions throughout Africa there is a growing realisation that more attention needs to be paid to how information literacy fits into larger institutional strategies. Despite much commendable work, in many cases information literacy is the sole responsibility of the library, and there is little appreciation by faculty and senior leadership of the contributions that information literacy brings to the teaching, learning and research in their institutions. The results of this are undesirable for all parties involved: libraries get burdened beyond their capacity, and faculty and students receive only a fraction of the benefits they stand to get from an embedded institution-wide programme.

**“In many cases information literacy is the sole responsibility of the library”**

This group’s discussion was designed to share the experiences of participants in implementing information literacy programmes, focusing on the relationship of programmes with other

departments outside the library. The group generally agreed that within an institution, information literacy needs to be:

- *Mandatory*: because information literacy programmes are often optional, students fail to get a sense of their importance, and many students opt out of them.
- *Examinable*: likewise, if students are not tested on these courses, they do not take them as seriously as they do other courses.
- *Contextualised and embedded into curricula*: information literacy should ideally be seen not as a separate course with its own course materials, but as a set of skills that help students to be successful in their overall coursework. Thus, information literacy should be integrated into regular courses in a way that also helps students to learn specific information literacy approaches that work best in particular fields.

These are the challenges and recommendations discussed by the group.

### 7.3.1 Challenges

- **Lack of institutional commitment**: information literacy is often seen as a ‘library thing’, and there is often too little understanding among academics and university leaders of the contributions that information literacy brings to research and teaching, and thus to the overall mission of their institutions.
- **Lack of resources**: the number of students needing to improve their information literacy skills is large, while the resources to do this are small. Most librarians already have a full load of responsibilities, and cannot give information literacy teaching and training the attention needed, much less find the time to work on wider and longer-term strategic considerations.
- **Ill-adapted staff structures**: contributing to the lack of resources is an allocation of staff resources that is inadequate for a changing environment. For instance, many libraries still have subject specialists rather than general information specialists, which is what libraries need more now.
- **Teaching skills**: because in most institutions the library has been the main driver of information literacy, the responsibility for teaching it has largely fallen to librarians, many of whom have no background or training in teaching.
- **Limited contact between librarians and academics**: a lack of opportunity for librarians and academics to engage results in a poor understanding among academics about how information literacy can benefit their work, and among librarians how they can better tailor their information literacy approaches to the needs of academics.
- **Lack of political clout**: in many institutions, libraries do not command the same respect and political power as the academic departments do. Faculty often do not appreciate the importance of libraries to the overall academic performance of an institution. This reduces the effectiveness of librarians’ efforts to lobby for greater institutional support for information literacy and its integration into the curricula.

### 7.3.2 Recommendations

- Curriculum review: information literacy curricula are often little more than library orientations. Needs diagnosis of student needs.
- Staff structures: need to be reviewed to ensure that they suit changing needs within a changing information landscape.
- Relationships between library staff and academics: concrete ways to strengthen these relationships should be found to build a common understanding of information literacy needs and approaches.
- Teaching skills: related to staff structures, universities need to either provide trainings in teaching skills to librarians, or shift the burden of teaching information literacy to the academic staff, or a combination of both.
- Online resources: although many materials and resources for information literacy exist online, those working on information literacy in institutions in Africa need to work to contextualise them so that they are practical and can be applied at a regional, local and institutional level.
- Marketing: the relevance and benefits of information literacy need to be better sold to students and academics. This can be done through evidence-based advocacy that shows the link between information literacy and academic performance, and even through changing some of the stuffy jargon – such as ‘information literacy’ itself – that obscures its real potential impact.
- Lobbying: probably most importantly, librarians need to do a better job of lobbying those in senior leadership positions. Where information literacy programmes have been successful, it has rarely happened without the support of such ‘champions’ to drive the agenda forward, help secure adequate resources, and to ensure that such programmes fit into the bigger institution-level picture.

## 7.4 Cross-cutting themes

When the three groups discussed their findings in a plenary session, the following emerged as themes common to all three areas:

### Changing role and implications

- All three groups came to the conclusion that the role of the librarian is changing from being an administrator with minimal contact with library users to being an active participant, constantly researching, learning and teaching.

### Acquisition of teaching skills

- As a result of the above all three groups agreed that there is need for the librarian to develop new skills to fulfil this changing role. Teaching skills were deemed to be particularly important.

### Understanding of technology and people skills

- An understanding of both technology and interpersonal skills was identified as a major requirement for a librarian to effectively influence information literacy.

#### Partnership between librarians and lecturers

- The need for partnership between librarians and academic staff was identified as key in changing the role of the librarian. The importance of attitude change in order to build a cooperative rather than a competitive relationship was emphasised.

#### Mobile phone technology

- Due to their high rate of penetration, mobile phones provide a unique and unparalleled opportunity for delivery of information literacy training to large numbers of students. This realisation from the groups led them to emphasise the need to capitalise on this technology.



## 8. List of participants

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