

Information Literacy (IL) programs, teaching, and assessment methods practiced in the Sri Lankan state university libraries for the undergraduate students.

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Abstract

Teaching Information literacy helps university students to think and act critically and creatively, to make decisions effectively, and to solve their study related problems. The current IL programs, and the teaching and assessment methods practiced in the Sri Lankan Universities have so far not been empirically researched. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to explore the Information Literacy programs, teaching, and assessment methods, practiced in the Sri Lankan state university libraries for the undergraduate students. The modified Delphi Method has been used in this research. The findings of the study reveal the nature of the active IL programs in the universities, the teaching methods used, and assessment methods that are in practice. All the university librarians have taken many steps to implement information literacy programs for the undergraduate students.

Keywords: *Information literacy programs, Sri Lankan Universities, Information literacy teaching, Information literacy assessment.*

Introduction

This extended abstract focuses mainly on the current Information Literacy (IL) programs, teaching, and assessment methods practiced in the under-graduate programs, by the Sri Lankan state universities. This abstract explains the partial findings of the ongoing Ph.D. Research project titled “A Conceptual Framework for Information Literacy (IL) Education in the Sri Lankan Universities: A Delphi Study”. Information skills are the basics that pave the way for developing the information literacy skills. The students who are empowered with information skills are able to improve their information literacy skills as indicated by the American Library Association, “Information Literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” (American Library Association, 1989). Accordingly, by applying the deep learning methods instead of surface learning, the students become information literate independent learners, critical thinkers, problem solvers, and lifelong learners.

Objectives of the Study

To explore IL programs currently being implemented in the Sri Lankan state university libraries for the undergraduate students
To identify the instructional methods used by librarians to teach IL to the university undergraduates
To examine the assessment methods used by the librarians to assess IL programs.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions.

What information literacy programs are being conducted for undergraduates in the Sri Lankan state university libraries?

What are the instructional methods used by librarians to teach IL in the Sri Lankan university undergraduate programs?

What assessment methods are used by the librarians to assess IL programs?

Methodology

In order to elicit responses for the above questions and to achieve the main objectives of the research so as to propose a conceptual framework and a curriculum for the IL programs, the researcher applied the mixed research method called Delphi research technique. A panel of experts was selected as the respondents covering all the state universities, in order to obtain the qualitative and quantitative data. The respondents were Library and Information Science (LIS) experts who have provided their expert opinions on complex issues associated with the IL skills framework and curriculum building. Two rounds of data collection were facilitated through questionnaires and responses delivered via electronic mail and online. The received feedback and the analysis were shared among the panelists at the beginning of each round. In the last round the outcome will be validated by the subject experts.

Experts Identification (Population and sample)

A Delphi study is not based on a statistical sample that tries to represent a given population. It is a group decision process involving competent specialists who have professional experience in the subject area. Dixon-Thomas, C (2012), Dakin, G. H. (2010), Geiselhofer, M (2010), have used the purposive sampling technique in their Delphi studies related to information literacy. The panel for the study was selected from the twenty-three universities, Institutes, campuses, and departments from among the experts who conduct IL programs for the undergraduates. The expert list was prepared with reference to the university librarians' Association membership directory of 2020.

Results and discussions

With reference to the first research question "What information literacy programs are being conducted for undergraduates in the Sri Lankan state university libraries?" 59.1% respondents replied that they use their own curriculum to implement the IL programs. According to the responses received from the panelists the IL programs were conducted under two categories, viz, a systematic way and a nonsystematic way. They are as follows: Library orientation programs, The One-shot Information Literacy Sessions, Information Literacy across the Curriculum, Credit-bearing Information Literacy Courses, Individual guidance, Research Methodology course, Reference Manager, Human Library Programs, Personal Guidance, Plagiarism, Database access, Referencing styles, Searching techniques and Literature surveys, Use of ICT tools for research purposes, Orientation programs conducted using Scavenger Hunt Library Tour, Brainstorming and Mind Mapping Techniques, How to use LMS in learning, Information Week, Ask A Librarian Service (Face to face/through social media), Research Assistance Service. However, all the programs stated above are not practiced by all the university libraries equally. The second research question was "What are the instructional methods used by the librarians to teach IL in the Sri Lankan university undergraduate programs?" It was found from

the responses that instructional methods vary from university to university. The main methods among them are lectures, Workshops, Seminars, Library tours, Demonstration, Classroom sessions, Guiding for the research, Mind mapping, social media, Online tutorials, Printed guides, short videos, Orientation programs, online orientation programs, Discussions via zoom, and PowerPoint presentations. The last research question was “What assessment methods are used by the librarians to assess IL programs?” As per the opinions expressed by the expert panel, 69.6% panelists responded that they evaluate students’ satisfaction level at the end of the IL programs. For this question the following answers were received. Test at the end of the course, Surveys, Questionnaires, Rubrics, Case studies, Diaries and logbooks, Discussions, Mind maps, Multiple Choice Questionnaires (MCQ), Presentations, Projects, Quizzes, Worksheets, Portfolios, Projects, Pre and Post-tests, Questionnaires, Surveys, Discussions, and Using feedback forms.

Conclusions

It was found that all the Sri Lankan university librarians are aware of the importance of the IL concept. Different types of programs, instructional methods, and assessment methods are being conducted by the university libraries in a systematic as well as a nonsystematic manner, at different learning stages in the undergraduate study programs. One of the main findings of the study is that fifty-six percent of the panelists replied that their university did not carry out systematically conducted IL programs with an assigned credit value. It is recommended that all university libraries need to start IL programs in a systematic manner. The proposed framework and the curriculum that will be formulated as the result of the main research will help the Universities to conduct their programs in a more organized, systematic, faculty recognized, and effective manner.

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