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SHORT COMMUNICATION: EDITORIAL TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE ON INFORMATION LITERACY AND USER EDUCATION.

By

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Today's world has become a rapidly evolving digital landscape. The ability to access, evaluate, and effectively utilize information has all the more become critical. The multiplicity of information sources, coupled with the rise of misinformation and fake news, has made it increasingly challenging for individuals to navigate the vast sea of knowledge. This special issue of the *Journal of Information Science and Technology*, 16 (1), April 2023, focuses on the crucial theme of *Information Literacy and User Education*, shedding light on the importance of equipping individuals with the appropriate skills to become discerning users and creators of information. The critical need is to nurture information literacy and empower users through education. Information literacy has a key role to play in combating misinformation.

In an age characterized by the swift dissemination of information through social media platforms and online news outlets, misinformation has become a pervasive issue. Its consequences can range from mild confusion to significant social and political disruptions. The ability to discern credible information from falsehoods has therefore become a critical skill in modern society. Consider a scenario where a prominent news story spreads rapidly across social media platforms, claiming that a new drug has been discovered to cure a widely prevalent disease. The news garners substantial attention and prompts individuals to share it enthusiastically, sparking hope and excitement among many affected by the disease.

However, individuals with a strong foundation in information literacy recognize the need for critical evaluation. They engage in fact-checking, verifying the credibility of the sources, and seeking out corroborating evidence. In this case, they may discover that the news story lacks credible sourcing, has not been covered by reputable news outlets, and is not supported by scientific evidence or expert opinions. Equipped with these critical thinking skills, these individuals understand the importance of not spreading unverified information. They refrain from sharing the news story further, preventing its amplification and potential harm. By exercising information literacy, they contribute to a more informed and responsible digital ecosystem. This guiding example highlights the profound impact of information literacy on individuals' ability to evaluate information critically and make informed decisions. Without the necessary skills to navigate the vast sea of information, individuals become susceptible to manipulation, fallacies, and inaccurate beliefs. Information literacy empowers users to discern reliable information from misinformation, ultimately fostering a more informed, engaged, and participatory society.

In essence, the example presented above underscores the significance of information literacy and user education in today's information-driven society. To address the challenges posed by the deluge of information and the spread of misinformation, it is essential to prioritize the development and implementation of comprehensive educational initiatives. By equipping individuals with the skills to evaluate, synthesize, and utilize information effectively, we can nurture a society that is better equipped to make informed decisions, participate meaningfully in public discourse, and critically engage with the information they encounter.

By fostering information literacy and user education, we can create a future where individuals are empowered to navigate the complexities of the digital world confidently. This special issue serves as a platform to explore, share, and advance knowledge in this vital area, highlighting innovative approaches, successful case studies, and best practices in information literacy and user education. Through collective efforts, we can work towards a society where information is not only accessible but also understood, empowering individuals to become active participants in the ever-evolving information landscape.

It is significant to point out that user education in libraries plays a vital role in empowering lifelong learners.. Libraries have long been cherished institutions for fostering knowledge, learning, and intellectual growth. These roles have become more imperative in the digital age, where information is readily available at our fingertips. Libraries play a crucial role in ensuring that users have the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate and utilize the vast resources effectively. This editorial also explores the significance of user education in libraries, highlighting its role in empowering individuals as lifelong learners.

By enhancing information literacy skills libraries have transformed from traditional repositories and custodians of books to dynamic centers of information and learning. User education programmes offered by libraries are designed to equip individuals with the necessary skills to locate, evaluate, and utilize information effectively. These programs focus on enhancing information literacy skills, which encompass critical thinking, information evaluation, and ethical use of information.

In a user education programmes at a library, individuals are introduced to various information sources, including print and digital materials. They learn how to navigate library catalogues, access online databases, and utilize search strategies to retrieve relevant information. Additionally, they are taught how to critically evaluate sources for credibility, accuracy, and bias. Through interactive workshops, library orientations, instructional sessions on the use of libraries, and one-on-one guidance, libraries empower users with the ability to engage with information critically.

User education in libraries is important for four main reasons:

1. ***Bridging the Digital Divide:*** User education programmes in libraries play a vital role in bridging the digital divide by providing access to technology and teaching individuals how to use it effectively. These programmes ensure that all members of the community have equal opportunities to enhance their information literacy skills and benefit from digital resources.
2. ***Promoting Lifelong Learning:*** User education fosters a culture of lifelong learning by encouraging individuals to continuously develop their information literacy skills. By equipping users with the ability to navigate and evaluate information effectively, libraries empower them to become self-directed learners who can adapt to new technologies and information sources.
3. ***Combating Misinformation:*** User education programmes in libraries are instrumental in combating misinformation. By teaching users how to critically evaluate sources, recognize biases, and verify information, libraries help individuals become more resilient to misinformation and equip them with the tools to make informed decisions.
4. ***Supporting Research and Academic Success:*** For students and researchers, user education programmes in libraries are invaluable. These programmes teach users how to conduct comprehensive research, utilize scholarly databases, and properly cite sources. By providing guidance in research methodologies and academic integrity, libraries contribute to the success of students and researchers.

User education programmes in libraries are indispensable in the digital age, where the ability to navigate and evaluate information is crucial. Libraries serve as facilitators of lifelong learning, promoting information literacy skills that empower individuals to become critical thinkers, informed decision-makers, and responsible users of information. By investing in user education, libraries play a vital role in building a society that values knowledge, fosters intellectual growth, and embraces the opportunities and challenges of the digital world.

This special issue covers several topics in the two broad areas of information literacy and user education. User education topics include the following:

- *User education as tool for utilization of library information resources by 300 level students;*
- *Effect of user education on the use of online databases by postgraduate students of library and information science, University of Nigeria Nsukka;*
- *Appraising user education delivery among library staff for enhanced information resource accessibility in Kogi State University, Ayingba;*
- *Impact of user education on library and information science students' use of the library at plateau state polytechnic Barkin Ladi, Nigeria;*
- *User education programs for postgraduate students in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library university of Nigeria, Nsukka Nigeria;*
- *User education programmes and students' use of the library in Colleges of Education in Cross River State, South-South, Nigeria; and*
- *Impact of user education program on undergraduate students in University of Abuja*

Information literacy topics covered are:

Effect of information literacy skills on utilization of electronic information resource by lecturers in Gombe State University;

Level of information literacy skills and use of databases among postgraduate students of University of Nigeria Nsukka;

Information literacy skill and use of electronic resources by undergraduates of Kaduna State University; and

Information literacy skills among postgraduate students of University of Nigeria Nsukka

This Special Issue is useful to teachers and students taking the *Information Literacy and User Education Course*, as well librarians who need a manual on this topic. It is the product of the scholarly mentoring of postgraduate students of the Course: *LIS 803-Information Literacy* at the University of Nigeria, by this author.



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(i) Status and Institutional Affiliation:

JAIST is a publication of the Information Technology Application Group, one of the Research Groups of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

(ii) Vision:

The vision is to provide a platform for scholars, researchers and professionals to publish scholarly works on Information Science and Technology. While studies in Information Science will provide theoretical framework for understanding the information phenomenon the applied information technology perspective is aimed at discussing how ICT tools and technology affect the way we live and do things.

(iii) Mission:

JAIST aims at providing a forum for scholars, researchers and professionals to showcase studies on information technology application across all disciplines. **JAIST's** latitude of discourse will therefore be multidisciplinary and global. Moreover, scholars from the medicals, physical, and biological sciences are welcome to contribute on how ICT is redefining and impacting their work culture and experience. Papers are also welcome from the disciplines of arts, social sciences, engineering, computer technology, law, education, library, etc.

(iv) Core Values:

JAIST upholds excellence, professionalism, high scholarship and robust discussion of issues and a demonstrable mastery of the topic(s). Topics discussed in their research and development context will be given priority. Therefore while complex statistical analyses are welcome, these figures must be explained in their developmental contexts. They must be applicable to practical issues, experiences, societal impacts and policy formulation and programme execution. Contributions that are anchored on lessons of experience are particularly welcome.

(v) **Peer review mechanism:** The journal promotes scholarly communication and papers submitted to it are subjected to blind peer-review process. The Editor-in-chief is not under any obligation to accept any paper or give explanation why a paper is rejected. Corrections suggested by peer-reviewers will however be brought to the attention of contributors

(vi) Editorial Board:

The Editorial Board is composed to reflect the global and multi-disciplinary perspectives of the journal and is made up of scholars, researchers and practitioners. Please refer to the left corner of this letter for the composition of the Editorial Board.

(vii) ISSN:

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Charles O. Omekwu (Ph.D)
Editor-in-Chief

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Aim

Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology aims at providing a forum for discussing current development in the discipline of information science and the emerging information technological tools and systems. The discussion of issues is expected to highlight their policy relevance and make recommendations aimed at empowering policy formulation and implementation. Authors should reflect a global view that suit the international community.

Approach

The introduction to each paper should be very incisive. The thesis in the introduction is expected to indicate the extent the author intends to cover with clear outline or divisions. Issues should not only be highlighted but discussed very analytically. In other words, authors should not only highlight the views of others authorities from the literature but their own analysis of those views.

Literature Analysis

Authors are expected to demonstrate a deep consultation of broad literature sources, books, and book chapters, journals, encyclopedia, conferences and workshops.

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Book Article or Chapter

James, N. E. (1988). Two sides of paradise: The Eden myth according to Kirk and Spock. In D. Palumbo (Ed.), *Spectrum of the fantastic* (pp. 219-223). Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Encyclopedia Article

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Lynch, T. (1996). *DS9 trials and tribble-ations review*. Retrieved October 8, 1997, from Psi Phi: Bradley's Science Fiction Club Web site: <http://www.bradley.edu/campusorg/psiphi/DS9/ep/503r.html>

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p>User Education as Tool for Utilization of Library Information Resources by 300 Level Students of Law, University of Jos Onyeke Emmanuel ONYEKE¹, Friday SHENENI², Lilian Ifeyinwa IBEH³, Ayefu Ibn OMALE⁴ Thomas Akinbayo Adigun⁵</p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - 1-9</p>
<p>Effective Use of Social Media Resource in Library and information Centers <i>Inuwa BUKAR¹ & Mohammed R. SHEJI²</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - 10-17</p>
<p>Improving The Cataloguing and Classification of Serial Materials at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike Chidimma G. AGUNWAMBA¹ & Emmanuel C. IHEKWOABA, (PhD)²</p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - 18-37</p>
<p>Effect of Information Literacy Skills on Utilization of Electronic Information Resource by Lecturers in Gombe State University, Gombe Nigeria <i>Wamdeo T. CHIROMA¹, Usman ALI²; Chinonye U. OBETA³ & Elizabeth Titilope, BABARINDE Ph.D⁴</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 38-46</p>
<p>Level of Information Literacy Skills and Use of Databases Among Postgraduate Students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria <i>Nkiruka E. IWUNDU, PhD, Abubakar Y. ABDULLAHI¹, Eucharika E. AMADI², Theresa A. Elejo³ & Samaila A. MAFARA⁴</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 47-54</p>
<p>Information Literacy Skill and Use of Electronic Resources by Undergraduates of Kaduna State University <i>Aminu TAGWAI¹, Dung Asabe PAM², Ifeyinwa G. AKAMONYE³, Ogonne Chidebere IGWE⁴ & Adaora Joy UDO-ANYANWU, Ph.D⁵</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 55-64</p>
<p>User Education Programmes and Students' Use of the Library in Colleges of Education in Cross River State, South-South, Nigeria <i>IDAKWO, Sunday Innocent, INYOKWE, Godwin Adie, NWEZE Odinakachi Chimatara & OKUBE Nwakaego</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 65-77</p>
<p>Impact of User Education Program on Undergraduate Students in University of Abuja <i>Patrick Phanuel UMORIYA¹, Markus GARBOBI², Abaka JOSHUA³, Abubakar Umar USMAN⁴ Michael NWAFOR⁵, Sunday Innocent IDAKWO⁶ (Corresponding Author)</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 78-86</p>
<p>Information Literacy Skills Among Postgraduate Students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka <i>Olalekan A. ONI¹, Ifeyinwa U. AJAGU², Aminu TAGWAI³, Blessing Ifeoma, MADU⁴ & Nkiruka E. IWUNDU, PhD⁵ (Corresponding Author)</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 87-100</p>
<p>Effect of User Education on the Use of Online Databases by Postgraduate Students of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka <i>Amuche Maryrose ASOGWA¹, Michael Yil'ep DEMI², Gertrude Ada EZE³, Mangbon Nvmu ELIJAH⁴ Thomas Akinbayo ADIGUN⁵</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 101-107</p>
<p>Appraising User Education Delivery Among Library Staff for Enhanced Information Resource Accessibility in Kogi State University, Ayingba <i>Dalhatu Kankia HUSSAINI¹, Abba IDRIS², Omono Vera AKHIMIEN³, Esther Ufedujo ODIBA⁴, Faith Olanike MESAGAN, Ph.D⁵ & ONYEBUCHI, Grace U. (Corresponding Authors)⁶</i></p>	<p>- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 108-115</p>

Impact of User Education on Library and Information Science Students' Use of the Library at Plateau State Polytechnic Barkin Ladi, Nigeria

Akpom, C, C (PhD)¹, Ede Matthew², Ekwuribe Chisom Mercy³, Sadiq Fauziyat Omeneke⁴,

Maina Lily Solomon⁵ - - - - - 116-127

User Education Programs for Postgraduate Students in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library University of Nigeria, Nsukka Nigeria

ODILI Ngozi¹, MALIK Olakunle Farouq²; MAGAJI Rhoda Victoria³, ADAMU Samaila⁴,

ALABA Kehinde Joy⁵ - - - - - 128-137