Evidence Based Library and Information Practice in Academic Libraries

Valuing knowledge and expertise:
Practicality and Applicability: Information Literacy
Influencing the Information Seeking Behavior of Undergraduate Students Through Evidence Based Practices:

The case of students at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Western Jamaica Campus..

By Sandra O. Stubbs
Presentation Outline

- Institutional Context
- Questions
- Evidence Base - Significant Issues in Library Literature
- Research Methodology

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Outline (cont’d)

• Application of New Evidence Using EB Framework

• Successes

• Challenges

• Opportunities for further Research, Review and Service Improvements

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Evidence Based Librarianship (EBL) seeks for and promotes the improvement of the librarian's practice through the use of the best available evidence” (Civallero 1)

“...an approach to information practice that promotes the collection, interpretation, and integration of valid, important and applicable user-reported, librarian-observed and research-derived evidence.” Booth and Brice
Definitions (cont'd)

- “EBLIP involves asking answerable questions, finding, critically appraising and then utilising research evidence from relevant disciplines in daily practice. It thus attempts to integrate user-reported, practitioner-observed and research-derived evidence as an explicit basis for decision-making”. (Booth, 2006)

- FROM Booth Presentation at ACURIL 2010 Conference: “Taking Stock: What is the Quantity and Quality of our Evidence Base?”
Institutional Context

- University of the West Indies (UWI) is a regional multi campus research institution, with branches at Mona, Jamaica (since 1948), St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago established in 1960 and Cave Hill, Barbados established in 1963.
- Open Campus serving 14 non-campus territories and others. The newest campus of the 60-year-old University of the West Indies (UWI) was formally launched in Antigua & Barbuda in June 2008.
- Multidisciplinary in nature, the teaching and research offerings include degree programmes to the doctoral level.

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Strategic Focus

- The (current) 2007-2012 UWI strategic plan speaks to the University’s role in helping the Caribbean to achieve a united vision by seeking to produce graduates who are, among other things:
  - Lifelong learners
  - Flexible
  - Innovative
  - Creative
  - Computer literate
  - Information literate
  - Culturally literate
  - Entrepreneurial

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• Interest in exploring students awareness and use of the electronic journal resources provided via the Library for their benefit.

• Goal: Improve reference and information services

• Practitioner Observation: Low usage of e-resources in-house

• Hypothesis: Under-utilisation due to lack of awareness

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An information literacy programme is in place for all library users, coordinated through a unit called the *Mona Information Literacy Unit (MILU)*
Methods include:
- ‘Walk in’, telephone, email and chat reference services
- Scheduled and on-demand information literacy sessions are conducted throughout the academic year.
- Electronic reference services offered to students at WJC mirror those at the main campus and include:
  - Virtual Reference Services (utilising QuestionPoint software);
  - Ebooks;
  - OPAC;
  - Electronic Databases;
  - Electronic Journals;
  - Subject Portals; Online Tutorials.

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UWI MONA LIBRARY
Large portion of library budget being expended on electronic resources in a bid to provide access to publications electronically through individual vendors and aggregators.

Ashcroft (147) argued that the provision of electronic journals collections has required that librarians grapple with issues of cost implications, best value and relevancy.

At Iowa University libraries, similar study found that with the prospects of dwindling budgets, identifying resources usage through research provided the “empirical support required to justify requests for increased fiscal allocations” ("Faculty" 627)

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Objectives and Research Questions

Five research objectives were identified as follows:

- Examine students’ knowledge of the existence of electronic journal resources at the Library.
- Collect statistical data to record students’ usage of the electronic resources.
- Explore factors influencing students’ use of electronic resources.
- Gather qualitative information to determine how satisfied students were with electronic resources used.
- Investigate students’ preferences for print or electronic journal formats.

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Questions

• Have students been informed that the library provides access to electronic journals and electronic research databases?

• Which of the electronic resources have the students been accessing, from what location, with what frequency and for what purposes?
Questions (cont’d)

- What are the factors that have influenced use or non-use of the electronic journals and electronic databases by students?
- For the students who have used the electronic, how do they rate their satisfaction?
- Do students have a preference for print or electronic formats information?

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Hypothesis

- Students were not using the Electronic Journal & Electronic Database Resources because they were unaware of their existence.

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Finding the Evidence

• Literature Review
Influence of Course Assignments and Library Instruction

Academic libraries reported that most database and electronic journal use coincided with the time period during which most research papers or projects would normally fall due in the academic year.

[for me this finding had specific resonance due to practitioner observation]

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Evidence Base

• According to the best available evidence found in the literature review at the time of the study the following were established:

• The prevailing evidence also pointed to lack of standard metrics
Finding the Evidence

- Survey research
Survey research design was utilised to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Population investigated was 4,398 students of the Faculty of Humanities and second and third years of study whether enrolled full-time or part-time. First year students were excluded from the study as they were the undergraduate group considered less likely to have used or been exposed to the electronic journal resources at the Library. This was confirmed by the results of a pilot test carried out by this researcher.
Limitations of the Study

- Study was limited to second and third year students of the Faculty of Humanities and Education for convenience and in keeping with the researcher’s time and available material resources.
Survey Instrument

- Developed a questionnaire specifically for this study
- Designed to be self-administered and included both closed and open-ended questions to solicit both fixed and detailed responses, respectively.

- Rating scales were also designed and employed to allow students to indicate their experiences with the electronic resources. Most closed questions allowed an “Other” response to encourage respondents to supply reasons for behaviours that the researcher might have missed.

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Survey Instrument - Arrangement

Six Sections:

• Demographic Data.
• Knowledge of Electronic Journal Resources
• Usage of Databases This sought to capture data regarding access, databases used and database preferences.
• Level of Satisfaction with Journal Articles Found in the Databases
• Usage of Electronic Journals (three questions).
• Other Comments (two questions) asking for recommendations for service improvements and further comments.

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Data Collection

• Survey conducted April - August 2006.
• Four hundred questionnaires were distributed in a bid to achieve the required sample size.

• In total, 268 viable completed questionnaires were retrieved.

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Findings

- The major finding was that Library usage was relatively high for Internet searching, emailing and consultation of digitised past papers, but comparatively low for usage of electronic research databases and electronic journals.

- It was discovered that while students surveyed were largely aware that electronic journal and database resources were available in the library, they were not sure if the resources were of relevance to their programmes of study, or how to use these resources advantageously.

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Findings

- 84% of respondents indicated that they were aware that the library provided the e reference resources.
- Contrasted with actual usage which was very low at 8.6% for database usage and 7.6% of responses for electronic journals usage.
- For students who used the electronic journals and databases, usage was mainly for course assignment and research. These students were mainly satisfied with them in terms of relevance, ease of use, and full-text availability. Some respondents had problems with speed of access.

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Hypothesis Disproved

- Students were largely aware of the Electronic Journal & Electronic Database Resources despite the fact that they were not using them much.

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Reasons
- Course Assignment
- Research
- General Information
- Personal Interests

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More Evidence from Study

- These included:
  - Increased **marketing** of electronic journal resources both in frequency and diversity of methods needed.
  - Increases in the number of **training interventions** across semesters, to allow students maximum opportunities to be conversant with the resources requested by students.
  - **Faculty** can be very **influential** in directing students to the resources necessary to help their research activities consistent with literature review.

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## User Reported Suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON THREADS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide More Training Opportunities</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access &amp; Technology Issues</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Publicity</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need More Help When Searching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did Not Know Service Existed</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>More Help Needed From Library Staff</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>More Subject Specific Resources Needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanks for Resources They Are Useful</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Resources More User Friendly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Use of Resources Mandatory</td>
<td>5</td>
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Research Question

- How can the survey results be utilized to positively influence the information seeking behaviour of undergraduate students
Opportunities

- Research evidence from paper on an applicable service area.
- New environment for implementing services as pioneer Librarian
- Staffing (Peer Tutors)
- Institutional support to succeed including:
  - Teaching materials from literacy unit (MILU)
  - Faculty incorporation of “Library module” in all foundation courses
  - Shared institutional goal to develop students who were life long learners with critical appraisal skills
Western Jamaica Campus (WJC) Branch Library

• Branch of the Mona Campus.
• Small but growing campus with approximately 800 students registered during the second semester of the 2010/2011 academic year.
• Established August 2008 offering programmes designed to reflect the areas of growth and development in Western Jamaica.
• Current programme emphasis includes: management (including hospitality and tourism management); media and communication; medicine nursing, law, accounting, banking and finance and psychology.
• It serves both graduates and undergraduates.
New Action Plan

• Marketing

• Information Literacy including training in use of electronic research resources
Considerations

Strategies to educate users about library resources and to demonstrate how these might help to improve their research skills and academic career.

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Big Questions

• How can we improve the performance of students in the areas of Research, Writing and critical thinking
• Help with pass rate in FD10A
• Ensure that Library electronic resources are used to avoid cancellation
• Help develop the graduate described in our strategic plan

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Focus: Information Literacy

• Specific Target:
  • Foundation Courses – bearing in mind the evidence of the importance of faculty input

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Challenges of Applying EBL

- Resources
- Using own research; continually evaluating own practice & sharing results
- Modules for outcome based approach to evaluating ones own efforts
- Management perspective/support for viability of process medium to long term

- [register and feedback garnered via evaluation forms)

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Expected Outcomes

- Train the trainers – peer tutoring
- Control group of 15 – 20 student assistants
- Information literacy programme implemented
- Resources marketed: orientation; foundation courses; strategically places notices etc
- Students using resources increasingly
- Faculty sensitized/trained and engaged with promotion of resources by using them as resources for assignments
- Work with both graduates and undergraduates

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Revised Methodology

• A Control group of 25 student assistants trained as peer tutors were studied at the Western Campus to track changes in the information seeking behaviour of undergraduate students over two years.
Major Questions for Control Group

- How Many times did you sit the FD10A
- How has working in the Library affected your academic Life
- How has peer tutoring affected
- What benefits or disadvantages accrued from being trained as peer tutors?

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What were my challenges?

- Determining outcome measures
- How do I know what the finished product will look like
- What skills will an information literate student Display.
- How do we determine that we have met our strategic objectives?
- Staffing
Measures Considered

- Improved pass rate in foundation courses alongside increased student participation in Library tutorials.

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Difficulty in Isolating Variables

- Could not control other variables
- Several things changing at the same time:
  - Teachers increased familiarity with material
  - New Teachers
  - Changes/improvements in delivery methods annually
Background to Foundation Courses

- Tested on:
  - Finding and using sources
  - Writing
  - Grammar
  - Organization
  - Content

ELPT – English Proficiency Testing
Pass/Fail
Background of Foundation Courses

EPT – English Proficiency Test
Critical Thinking Skills

“English for Academic Purposes (FD10A) is designed to help students critically engage with texts, research and write effective essays for academic audiences, and participate intelligently in oral and written discussions on a variety of topics., while developing an understanding of the linguistic context in which they operate in the Caribbean.
Background to Foundation Courses (cont’d)

- FD_{10} A – English for Academic Purposes
- FD_{14}A – Writing in the Disciplines
- FD_{12}0
Focus Group Interview Questions

What Foundation Courses Are You Required To take?
Which ones Have you taken so Far and What was the result?

How has working in the Library Impacted your academic career?
Focus Group Questions (cont’d)

How can we serve our clients better?
What are your thoughts on the Foundation Courses
Any Further Comments/Observations
Results

- Students stated that:
  - Working as peer tutors in library assisted their research skills not only for foundation courses but all courses as each had a research component
  - As peer tutors they were able to help friends as were more familiar with resources
  - Some students failed foundation courses because they assumed that since it was “English” it would be easy.
  - Other students left course until latest possible time as they did not see the relevance to their programme of study
Observations

- Some focus group members transferred to other campuses before doing foundation courses.
- Some students that replaced them had already done course successfully before applying to work in the library.
- In all cases students working in the library who took foundation courses passed at first sitting.
Lessons Learnt

Helping students to recognize an information need, then find and use information responsibly requires collaboration among all stakeholders.

Pass rate in foundation courses improved across three years, however, difficult to isolate contributing factors due to dynamic environment.

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Peer tutoring, participation of lecturers and support from programme managers in collection development were all integral in seeking to improve students research and creative thinking skills.

Students’ commitment to the research process also a contributing factor.
This paper concludes that a multipronged evidence based approach that is subject to continuous evaluation and upgrade is valuable in seeking to influence students towards improved information seeking practices.

Need to look at evidence from the field of education related to determining learning outcomes as well as course design and evaluation.
Redefining the Problem/Question
Helping the Caribbean to achieve a united vision by seeking to produce graduates who are, among other things:

- **Lifelong learners**
- Flexible
- Innovative
- Creative
- **Computer literate**
- **Information literate**
- Culturally literate
- Entrepreneurial
New Evidence - ILL Trends


- Emerging trends shown include:
  - Online tutorials
  - Moving from large IL tutorials to multiple small ones – short, point of need learning tools
  - Point of need learning tools
  - Interactivity

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• Collaboration and integration -
  • team approach to developing instruction tools
• Development of interactive video tutorials
• Treating issues plagiarism and ethical values.

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Next “Big” Questions

How do we recognize the finish product as per strategic plan?

How can we determine that the Library’s ILL offerings made a difference?

What should we do differently?

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Opportunities for further Research

- It is intended that further studies be conducted to review student’s knowledge and use of the electronic library resources since this study was conducted, as well as investigating any measurable impact on their critical thinking and lifelong learning skills.
- Continued understanding and use of EBLIP toolkits also desirable.
Works Cited


Works Cited (continued)
