Information Literacy Program at the Makerere University College of Health Sciences: Is it worth the effort?

By

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Outline

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• Overview of MUK & MUCHS
• IL at MUCHS
  – Worthiness of IL programme
• Challenges
• Conclusion
Introduction

• IL an important component in people’s daily work

• In an era of easy access to info, med students/staff/researchers continue to face challenges of knowing which sources are authentic & how to search & retrieve this info

• Hence the need to develop competencies - ability to tell between peer-reviewed scholarly resources and opinion pieces
Overview

**MUK**
- Established – 1922 as a technical college
- Today, MUK has 10 faculties, 7 institutes, 4 schools & 1 College
- Day, evening, & external study progs to 30,000 undergrad, 3000 grad in the 2008/2009 acad. yr.
- Active center for research & national repository

**MUCHS**
- Established in 1924, when MUK started offering med. educ.
- Evolved from a Med. Sch. of a Univ. College in the early 1900s, to a Med Faculty, & finally to a constituent College, under the Univ. & Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2008.
Overview cont’d...

- Constitutes 4 schools: Medicine, Public Health, Bio-Med. Sciences & Health Sciences

Albert Cook Library

- 1946-served higher medical educ. in E.African region
• Uganda’s major biomed/health sciences Library
• Serves the College, Teaching Hospital, & other hospitals countrywide
• Primarily, a med. school lib. but has extended services to practicing health workers in Uganda.
IL at MUCHS

- Many definitions of IL
- Owusu-Ansah (2003) has suggested calling a halt to defining the term & just getting on with the business of doing IL
- ...knowing when & why one needs information, where to find it, & how to evaluate, use & communicate it in an ethical manner (CLIP, 2004)
IL at MUCHS cont’d…

IL has been incorporated in the curriculum with the help of (College librarians & administrators)

IL sessions

• End-user training - introduction to lib. services, sections & activities, Virtua OPAC

• Actual info searching & retrieval - accessing resources provided by the College
  – Tips on evaluating info sources & identifying authentic websites from the millions of health-related web pages
  – Narrowing searches & using Boolean
  – Downloading articles (HTML vs PDF)
IL at MUCHS cont’d…

– Identifying keywords of research topics, noting synonyms & antonyms

• Information Competence & Management course

• Evaluating scholarly research articles
IL at MUCHS cont’d…

• Communication & research presentation skills & publisher requirements
• Reference management
• Lunch time sessions
• Workshops (HI N-AG-OA, Reference management, MEERU for Lib staff, optimizing use of e-resources, licensing & negotiation skills, & scholarly publishing).
Worthiness of IL Programmes

- Increased usage of library resources

Source: ITOCA
Worthiness of IL cont’d…

• Building a personal knowledge base
  – Life long learning - the trainees take with them skills after school – leads to informed health care services delivery – problem solving. Info illiteracy has a negative impact on business and society
  – Ability to evaluate information
  – As individuals gain the ability to participate in society in an informed & reflective manner, society itself improves
Worthiness of IL cont’d…

• Improved quality of research
  – Measurement of research output & ranking of universities an industry in itself
  – Quality measured by reviewing citations/refs of research articles/scope, currency etc (usdl)
  – More articles being published at the College
  – More publications in open access journals

• Note: these qualifications may not be attributed to IL alone. Change of curriculum from traditional to PBL may have also prompted use of more resources, hence improved quality of research.
Evaluation of the programmes

- Evaluation at end of each session, categorized as overall presentation, duration, format of the presentation & usefulness of the content

- Analysis indicates that:
  - Students are increasingly interested in the sessions to keep themselves updated, & to do their coursework.
  - The IL programme is generally appreciated & highly rated as very appropriate for researchers, staff & students
  - The course should be extended to dept level
  - The course should be credit worthy
Worthiness of IL cont’d...

• Is this worth the effort?
• Yes – ability to search & retrieve timely & relevant information for problem solving & evidence-based health decision making is a success story
Challenges

• Success stories have been said about IL at the MUCHS. However, there have been some challenges
  – Ltd library budgets (infrastructure, software, power supply, training-ELIN, Virtua, EN etc)
  – Poor IL attendance probably because the course is not yet credit giving
  – Costly lunch time sessions
Conclusion

• The MUCHS vision is ‘to be a center for academic & health service excellence’ and the mission is ‘to improve the health of the people of Uganda & beyond, & to promote health equity by providing quality education, research & health services’

• The Library has been very supportive of this vision by ensuring that all the stakeholders get the required competencies to improve teaching, learning & research
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Thank you for your attention!