

Users' ratings on the improved library orientation programme at Zarqa Private University: a comparative study

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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study on library orientation programme conducted in 2008 at Zarqa Private University Jordan revealed that the offered programme had focused more on theoretical rather than the practical aspects. Subsequently, another study was conducted whereby an improved programme was offered to first year students in the second semester of the academic year 2008/2009. The programme covers three courses which concentrated on (a) practical library skills, (b) writing research requirements and (c) formulating research methodology. This study makes comparisons between the students' ratings on their perceived achievement of the programme objectives in both studies. Data were collected from 155 usable questionnaires returned by the population of 621 first year students (25% response rate). Study findings indicate that (a) the average of mean of students' ratings on the achievement of the practical objectives of the improved library orientation programs is higher (3.28) than the mean found in the previous study (2.91); and (b) in spite of the improvement of respondent's ratings in the current study, there is still a need, in the future, to offer long time library orientation programmes that concentrate on more practical aspects.

Keywords: Library orientation programme; User education; Information literacy; Bibliographic instruction; Academic libraries; Jordan

INTRODUCTION

Many library orientation programmes encourage faculty-librarian collaboration with the goal of helping students to develop the skills to recognise the various information sources and to use the information in correct and suitable ways. A library orientation programme is "a service created to introduce library users to the library environment and informally assess users' research skills"(Kaetrena Davis, Gregg Graniteville Library , University of South Carolina Aiken, personal communication, 5 December 2010). The programme aims to educate library users on how to use the library and often includes bibliographic education and information literacy skills. Bibliographic education enables users to define the required information, its site, its evaluation, and the right usage (American Library Association, 1989), whereas information literacy instruction enables users to have "the ability to recognise when information is needed", and then "locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information" (American Library Association, 1989). In the context of higher education, Cameron, Wise and Lottridge (2007) and the Association of College and Research Libraries (2008) defined information literacy as a set of competencies that provides students with a foundation for academic coursework, effective job performance,

active citizenship, and lifelong learning. Information literacy programmes at college and university libraries provide course related instruction, tutorials and other interventions to support student development of information literacy skills (Rockman, 2002).

There are differences between the theoretical objectives and the practical objectives of a library orientation programme. Theoretical objectives are achieved through activities with a set of abilities that provide the library users with theoretical knowledge to enable them to know several ideas about the library such as library services and how to benefit from them; library instructions; library departments; library printed collections; electronic library collection; library catalogue; the importance of information on students academic achievement; the importance of library in supporting search skills; the importance of reading and promoting reading; finding out information sources; and defining the needed information.

Practical objectives, on the other hand, are achieved through activities with a set of abilities that provide the users with practical skills aimed at allowing students the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge obtained in academic programme to practical work. The activities are designed to improve students' future performances, and develop, through research and professional experience, a sense of what they are striving to achieve, and also how to collect the data that will help them meet these goals by supporting the learning process and helping translate knowledge into action manifested in information skills. These skills encompasses the ability to: access library site and how to use it; use library catalogue; access printed collection and how to use them; access needed information; use library services; access electronic collection in databases and how to use them; use search strategies; evaluate needed information; and access periodicals' indexes and how to use them.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the first year students' ratings on the fulfillment of library orientation programmes in terms of the theoretical and practical objectives at Zarqa Private University in Zarqa city in Jordan, and to compare the students' ratings in the previous study with the ratings from this study. It aims to find out the extent of improvements achieved if any as perceived by the students sampled. It is hoped that the results of this study will be useful to: (a) university library administrators who place importance on the library orientation programme to encourage information source use in the education processes and scientific search; and (b) researchers who perform research related to library orientation programme offered by university libraries, in Jordan, as well as in the Arab world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature on library orientation programme reveals a number of studies that have tackled this subject in different parts of the world. Abdunaby and Ala'ani's study (2000) stressed the importance of library instruction as part of university students' participation in social development process. Their study recommended that libraries : (a) encourage students and support them to participate in university library lecture and training meetings on using library services for study and research; (b) allocate specialised course credits in students' study plans in order to promote library usage and academic achievement; and (c) investigate the information needs of social community in order to market and get high investment of information resources.

Julien (2000) revealed in a national survey of library orientation programmes in Canadian academic libraries, that trends in teaching objectives, methods and content of library instruction have witnessed little change in the past five years. She reported that instructional librarians continue to face numerous challenges, particularly with regard to limited resources and faculty and student attitudes. The study highlighted that library orientation programme should concentrate on research strategy, information evaluation skills, access to information sources, and using databases. And although there are obvious examples where instructors have taken responsibility for learning how to teach well, and, where libraries have devoted significant resources to the instructional function, Julien (2000) opined that there is a remarkable level of apparent neglect for instructions in Canadian academic libraries.

Naser (2004), in his study on the supporting role of the educational bibliographic programme in academic libraries for the scientific research, revealed the effects of these programmes in increasing libraries usage and improving students research skills. He listed the following purpose of the educational bibliographic programme in academic libraries: (a) to support scientific research through description of the scientific research process; (b) to provide students with good ideas about information sources; (c) to develop students skills in information organising; and (d) to ensure the understanding of ethical and legal matters such as authorship and publishing rights. Ashoor (2005) who conducted a study on the forms of library orientation programmes offered by academic libraries at the King Fahed University for Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia emphasised the need for four components in the library instruction programme, namely library orientation programme; library tour for graduate and new faculty members; education programme and a course on scientific research skills. Kraemer, Lombardo and Lepkowski (2007) compared three methods of library instruction programme: online instructions only, live instructions, and the "hybrid" combination of live instructions and online tutorials. The results showed that there were differences in student performance in relation to pedagogy and suggested that online instructions should be one of the comprehensive information literacy programmes used in library orientation, which must also include librarian-student interaction. Using a hybrid instructional model, librarians can address multiple learning styles, engage students with the latest technology, respond to external pressures to move into an online teaching environment, and still maintain the physical contact that is vital to student learning.

Many researchers studied information literacy instruction as part of the orientation programme conducted by academic and public libraries. Cameron, Wise and Lottridge (2007) suggested that college and university libraries provide course-related instructions, tutorials, and other interventions to support students' development of information literacy skills. They added that many library instructions encourage faculty-librarian collaboration with the goal of helping students to develop these skills. Mohammad (2003) surveyed Egyptian public libraries' roles in environmental information literacy with the aim to increase users' information awareness. The study recommended that public libraries offer services, which included translation, online search, holding symposiums, information programme, and display films to increase use. Mark and Boruff-Jones (2003) saw the possibility of a plethora of continuing research stemming from student engagement in information literacy and assessment. They added that the most important thing for library research is to strive to find sound measures of information literacy outcomes.

Shawabka's study (2006) revealed that there was general acceptance of the information literacy programme offered by United Arab Emirates university libraries. Study results showed a significant statistical difference ascribed to gender and students year of study as

males and first year students rated more positively on the information literacy instruction in terms of making them understand about university libraries and their collections; providing search skills; and providing catalogue using skills. They rated less positive towards the electronic services and the know how of using special collections.

In Jordan, Klaib (2009) found that information literacy instructions are not comprehensive programmes. No more than five responding libraries (35.7%) offer students the required lectures that inform them about the importance of libraries and library departments; provide practical training on online access to databases through the Internet; and train users on the usage of periodical indexes. Besides, the curricula offered by more than 78.6% of the respondents lacked courses or exercises that support library usage. Findings of information literacy instructions offered to students at Zarqa Private University, revealed that the programme concentrates on the theoretical, rather than the practical aspects.

OBJECTIVE AND METHOD

The objective of the current study is to investigate students' ratings on the contents of the improved library orientation programme offered at Zarqa Private University, Jordan in semester 3, 2008/2009 academic session and make comparisons with the results of a previous study conducted in 2008 (Klaib 2009), which has been reported elsewhere. The earlier study revealed that the library orientation programme concentrated on the theoretical, rather than the practical aspects. In this follow-up study, the researcher offered an improved library orientation programme by including three courses concentrating on practical library skills, writing research requirements and formulating methodology to the First Year students in their second semester of the academic year 2008/2009. The researcher aims to find out the effect of the improved programme on students' ratings towards the achievement of the programme's goals and compare the current findings with the previous results. The survey instrument (Appendix) was administered to the total population of 621 students of First Year students and 155 responses (25%) were found to be usable. The respondents were distributed across faculties as shown in Table 1. Four research questions were posed to meet the objective of the study:

- a) What are the differences between students' ratings on the theoretical objectives' achievement of the library orientation programme in the current and the previous study?
- b) Are there any significant statistical differences between students' ratings on the achievement of the theoretical objectives of the offered library orientation programme according to gender and faculty type?
- c) Are there differences between students' ratings on the practical objectives' achievement of the library orientation programme in the current and the previous study?
- d) Are there any significant statistical differences between students' ratings on the achievement of the practical objectives of the offered library orientation programme according to gender and faculty type?

For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire that was used in the previous study was used again as the data collection instrument. The instrument was worded and administered in the Arabic language. It was designed and developed by the researcher, based on his personal academic experiences, professional literature, as well as feedback

gathered from discussions with Zarqa Private University faculty members, and consultation with academic referees specialised in Library and Information Science (LIS). At the pilot stage, four LIS academics, comprising two university professors and two associate professors tested the initial questionnaire for clarity and the extent in which each item meets with the research objective. Based on their comments, the questionnaire was modified where necessary. Respondents indicate how they generally feel about the programme's theoretical and practical usefulness, by rating the degree of their feelings on a five-point scale where 1="strongly disagree", 2="disagree", 3="neutral", 4="agree", and 5="strongly agree". The study uses descriptive statistics to describe the respondents' characteristics and t-test for univariate factors analysis between subjects factors.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Across Faculties and Gender

	Faculties	Total Student Population	Number Student Respondents	Gender	
				M	F
Science-based Faculties	Science and Information Technology	125	29	20	9
	Economics and Administrative Sciences	294	76	54	22
	Nursing	20	4	1	3
	Allied Medical Sciences	13	3	2	1
	Technology Engineering	12	4	2	2
Human-based Faculties	Arts	109	30	18	12
	Educational Sciences	40	7	2	5
	Law	8	2	2	--
	Total	621	155	101	54

RESULTS

Comparing Students' Ratings on the Theoretical Objectives Achievement of Library Orientation Programme in the Current and the Previous Study

Table 2 shows that the average mean score for both studies is very close; with 3.77 in the present study compared to 3.70 in the previous study. Students' responses in both studies show very high agreement on the achievement of the theoretical objective "to provide students with good idea about library departments" (current study 4.50; previous study 4.0); whereas the ratings of the objective "to provide students with good idea about the importance of information on students' academic achievement" increased from 3.5 to 4.4. The ratings of two theoretical objectives dropped from above 4.0 in the previous study to below 4.0; they are "to provide students with good ideas about library services and to benefit from them" (previous study 4.5); and to "teach awareness of library missions and tasks" (previous study 4.4); The ratings given to the rest of the theoretical goal statements in both studies were moderately high ranging from 3.1 and 3.9.

Significant Statistical Differences between Students' Rating on the Theoretical Objectives Achievement of the Library Orientation Programme by Gender and Faculty Type

Table 3 shows that there are no significant statistical differences between students' ratings

on the achievement of the theoretical objectives of the library orientation programme based on gender (F: .800, Sig .373) and faculty type (F: .809, Sig .370).

Table 2: Comparing Students' Ratings on the Theoretical Objectives Achievement of the Library Orientation Programme

No	Theoretical objectives	Current Study		Previous Study	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
1	Provide students with good idea about library departments	4.5	0.9	4.0	7.4
2	Provide students with good idea about information importance on students academic achievement	4.4	1.0	3.5	8.3
3	Provide students with good idea about library importance in supporting search skills	3.9	1.2	3.5	8.2
4	Teach students awareness of library mission and tasks	3.8	0.0	4.4	6.5
5	Provide students with good idea about library catalogue	3.8	0.9	3.6	8.8
6	Provide students with good idea about finding out information sources	3.7	1.3	3.4	8.9
7	Provide students with good idea about defining the needed information	3.7	1.0	3.2	8.7
8	Provide students with good idea about library printed collections	3.7	1.0	3.9	4.7
9	Provide students with good idea about library services and how to benefit from them	3.5	1.4	4.5	6.0
10	Provide students with good idea about importance of reading and promoting it	3.4	1.4	3.3	8.1
11	Provide students with good idea about electronic library collection	3.3	1.3	3.7	8.8
12	Provide students with good idea about library instructions	3.1	1.4	3.4	8.8
Average mean score		3.77		3.70	

Table 3: T-Tests of Significance Between Theoretical Objectives Ratings and Gender / Faculty Type

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected	73.280a	3	24.427	1.034	.380
Model Intercept	228058.503	1	228058.503	9650.748	.000
Faculty	19.128	1	19.128	.809	.370
Gender	18.902	1	18.902	.800	.373
Faculty*Gender	63.529	1	63.529	2.688	.103
Error	3568.307	151	23.631		
Total	319590.000	155			
Corrected Total	3641.587	154			

Comparing Students' Ratings on the Practical Objectives Achievement of the Library Orientation Programme in the Current and Previous Study

The mean ratings on the degree of achievement of the practical goals of the library orientation programme in the current study was lower than ratings on the theoretical goals, ranging from 2.2 to 4.4 (Table 4). However, the average mean score of the current study was higher (3.28) compared to the previous study (2.91). The results also show that the mean ratings on the achievement of the practical goals in the current library

orientation programme was little higher compared to the mean found for the previous study (2.3 to 3.7). In the current study respondents were agreeable (rating above 4.0) that the library orientation programme teach them searching skills in the library catalogue, definition skills for needed information, research strategies skills to search the databases, and access skills for needed information.

Table 4: Comparing Students' Ratings on the Practical Objectives Achievement of the Library Orientation Programme

No.	Practical objectives	Current Study		Previous Study	
		Mean	S. D	Mean	S. D
1	Teach students search skills in library catalogue	4.4	0.9	3.5	8.7
2	Teach students definition skills for needed information	4.2	1.1	3.1	8.8
3	Teach students research strategies skills in databases	4.1	1.0	2.4	9.1
4	Teach students access skills for needed information	4.0	1.1	3.2	8.5
5	Teach students the skill to access library site, and how to use it.	3.2	1.4	3.7	8.5
6	Teach students access skills in library electronic collection	3.1	1.4	2.5	9.2
7	Teach students access skills in library printed collection	2.5	1.5	3.2	9.0
8	Teach students evaluation skills for needed information	2.4	1.5	2.3	9.1
9	Teach students skills of using library services	2.3	1.4	2.9	8.3
10	Teach students usage skills for periodicals' indexes	2.2	1.4	2.3	9.1
Average mean score		3.24		2.91	

Significant Statistical Differences between Students' Ratings on the Practical Objectives Achievement of the Library Orientation Programme by Gender and Faculty Type

Table 5 shows that there are no significant statistical differences of students' ratings on the achievement of the practical objectives of the library orientation programme based on gender ($F=.668$, Sig .415) and faculty type ($F=.578$, Sig .310).

Table 5: T-Tests of Significance Between Practical Objectives Ratings and Gender / Faculty Type

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected	24.542a	3	8.181	.352	.788
Model Intercept	120946.406	1	120946.406	5200.508	.000
Faculty	7.217	1	7.217	.310	.578
Gender	15.545	1	15.545	.668	.415
Faculty * Gender	11.658	1	11.658	.501	.480
Error	3511.755	151	23.257		
Total	170554.000	155			
Corrected Total	3536.297	154			

CONCLUSION

The average mean scores of students' ratings on the achievement of both the theoretical and practical objectives of the library orientation programme in the current study is higher (3.77; 3.24) than in the previous study (3.70; 2.91). In spite of the big improvement of respondent's ratings on the achievement of practical objectives in the current study, there is still a need to offer long term library orientation programme strategies in the future and embed more practical applications in the programme. Based on the study's findings, the researcher suggests the following viable solutions to continually improve the conduct of library orientation programmes in Zarqa Private University:

- (a) more attention given to various methods of library orientation programmes, focusing on teaching students the practical skills that enable them to access the required information and encourage them to increase library usage;
- (b) specialised credit, or non-credit library skills courses, or exercises/units are offered as part of the study plan, which support library usage and scientific research; and
- (c) more studies on the suitability of contents and feedback on library orientation programmes are conducted from time to time to inform the library administrators on the extent of achievement of the instructional objectives.

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STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX

Please read the following phrases, then mark (X) to the most appropriate level of agreement regarding the objectives achievement of the library orientation programme at Zarqa Private University, Jordan.

A. Ratings on the theoretical objectives achievement of the library orientation programme.

No.	Theoretical objectives	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1.	Provide students with good ideas about library services and how to benefit from it					
2.	Provide students with good ideas about information importance on their academic achievement					
3.	Provide students with good ideas about electronic library collection					
4.	Provide students with good ideas about library printed collections					
5.	Provide awareness of library mission and tasks					
6.	Provide students with good ideas about library importance in supporting search skills					
7.	Provide students with good ideas about library instructions					
8.	Provide students with good ideas about definition the needed information					
9.	Provide students with good ideas about library departments					
10.	Provide students with good ideas about finding out information sources					
11.	Provide students with good ideas about reading importance and promote it.					
12.	Provide students with good ideas about library catalogue					
13.	Others (Please state)					

B. Ratings on the practical objectives achievement of the of library orientation programme.

No.	Practical objectives	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1.	Teach students search skills in library catalogue					
2.	Teach students accessing skills for needed information					
3.	Teach students the skill for access to library site and how to use it					
4.	Teach students definition skills for needed information					
5.	Teach students research strategies skills in databases					
6.	Teach students access skills in library printed collection					
7.	Teach students access skills in library electronic collection					
8.	Teach students usage skills for periodicals' indexes					
9.	Teach students skills of using library services					
10.	Teach students evaluation skills for needed information					
11.	Others (Please state)					