



# THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN PROMOTING AND ENHANCING INFORMATION LITERACY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**Rahila R. Hassan**

Department of Library and Information Science,  
National Open University of Nigeria University Village Plot 91, Cadastral Zone Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway Jabi, Abuja,  
Nigeria. Email: [rtenebe@noun.edu.ng](mailto:rtenebe@noun.edu.ng)

**Ifeoma Abigail Ajie**

Department of Library and Information Science,  
National Open University of Nigeria University Village Plot 91, Cadastral Zone Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway Jabi, Abuja,  
Nigeria. Email: [iajie@noun.edu.ng](mailto:iajie@noun.edu.ng)

**Eunice V. Akpovire**

University Library,  
National Open University of Nigeria University Village Plot 91, Cadastral Zone Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway Jabi, Abuja,  
Nigeria. Email: [eakpovire@niun.edu.ng](mailto:eakpovire@niun.edu.ng)

## Abstract

Information literacy (IL) is the ability to think critically and make informed judgments about information accessed and used. It is a crucial skill for academic success and lifelong learning. Academic librarians in Nigerian universities play key roles in fostering IL, employing diverse strategies to equip students with essential competencies. However, despite increasing recognition of their importance, limited comprehensive understanding exists of the specific roles, strategies, and collaborative practices adopted by academic librarians to promote IL in Nigerian universities. This systematic review synthesizes empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025 to examine the evolving roles and practices of academic librarians in advancing IL. A structured search across EBSCOhost, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Scopus identified peer-reviewed studies on librarian-led IL initiatives within Nigerian higher education contexts. Out of 87 articles screened, 22 met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed thematically. Findings reveal diverse instructional strategies, including blended learning approaches, use of digital tools, and integration of IL into course curricula. Persistent challenges include inadequate ICT infrastructure, limited professional development, and weak institutional support for collaborative IL instruction. Research gaps were also identified, such as insufficient focus on disciplinary-specific IL, limited curriculum integration, and minimal inclusion of academics' perspectives on collaboration. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for stronger institutional collaboration, policy backing, and evidence-based interventions to enhance IL instruction and research in Nigerian universities. The review highlights implications for future researchers and information professionals by identifying existing gaps and promoting strategies to strengthen IL development in higher education

**Keywords:** Academic Librarians, Information Literacy (IL), Higher Education, Nigerian Universities, Systematic Review

## Introduction

Information literacy (IL) encompasses the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively (CILIP 2018). Academic librarians in Nigerian universities play a pivotal role in equipping students with these competencies, which are crucial for navigating the vast and complex information landscape. However,

despite the recognised importance of IL, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of the strategies employed by librarians to enhance IL among students. Recent studies have highlighted various approaches adopted by Nigerian academic librarians to promote IL. For instance, a study by Tella (2022) examined the use of advanced technologies in teaching IL in Nigerian



universities, identifying traditional face-to-face methods complemented by technological tools like tablets and Google Classroom as prevalent instructional strategies.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist in effectively promoting IL. A study by Ubogu (2022) revealed that poor funding, insufficient ICT training, and inadequate professional manpower hinder librarians' acquisition of ICT skills, which are essential for modern IL instruction. Furthermore, Dime, Akporhonor, and Ogbomo (2022) emphasized the need for continuous upskilling of librarians to manage electronic information resources effectively, highlighting the dynamic nature of IL instruction.

This study aims to critically review existing literature on the roles of academic librarians in promoting IL in Nigerian universities, identify the strategies and interventions employed, examine the extent of collaboration between librarians and faculty, analyse reported challenges, and highlight gaps in the current literature. By synthesising findings from recent studies, this research seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness of IL initiatives and offer recommendations for enhancing IL programs in Nigerian higher education institutions.

To provide a structured lens for analysing the roles of academic librarians in information literacy development, this study adopts the ACRL Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians Framework (2017). The framework identifies core domains such as advocacy, instructional design, leadership, lifelong learning, collaboration, and digital pedagogy, which collectively define the instructional identity of academic librarians. Integrating this framework strengthens the review by offering a conceptual structure against which the instructional roles, strategies, collaborative practices, and challenges identified in the literature can be evaluated. The ACRL framework, therefore, guides the interpretation of librarians' practices and highlights areas where Nigerian academic librarians align with, or diverge from, globally recognized expectations for teaching librarians.

In today's digital and information-driven academic environment, information literacy (IL) has become a critical skill for students in higher education. Academic librarians are key stakeholders in the promotion of IL, particularly within Nigerian universities. However, despite growing awareness of their potential roles, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding of the strategies they employ and the effectiveness of their interventions. This concern aligns with the findings of Imam, Okoro, and Ilori (2024), who observed a general inconsistency in the implementation of information literacy programs across Nigerian university libraries, largely due to policy limitations and lack of collaborative frameworks. Therefore, this study seeks to critically examine the roles, strategies, collaborative efforts, and challenges of academic librarians in promoting information literacy in Nigerian universities, while identifying gaps for future research and policy development.

In this work, we aim to answer the following question: How have academic librarians promoted IL in Nigerian universities? This is guided by 5 research questions (RQ):

1. What roles do academic librarians play in promoting information literacy in Nigerian universities as reported in various studies?
2. What are the various strategies and interventions utilised by academic librarians in enhancing information literacy?
3. To what extent do academic librarians collaborate with academics in promoting information literacy as reported in previous studies?
4. What challenges and barriers do librarians face in facilitating information literacy programs as reported in the literature?
5. What gaps exist in the current literature on academic librarians' involvement in information literacy?

## Methods

This systematic literature review has been conducted following the guidelines proposed by the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews (Higgins et al., 2011), so that other researchers can repeat and verify and also ensure that all items



are included. Additionally, the focus of this study was on the literature on the roles librarians play in information literacy. The publications included were in English from the past ten (10) years. The main sources of identifying literature for the review are EBSCOhost, SCIEDIRECT, JSTOR, ProQuest, Scopus and Google Scholar for peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025. The guidelines for the systematic review followed are defining the scope of the review, developing a protocol, searching for and selecting studies, assessing study quality, synthesising data, and interpreting the findings (Higgins et al., 2011). These are indicated throughout the paper.

The following sub-section provides each step that occurred during the literature review.

**Information sources**

The search queries considered during the search process:

1. ("academic librarians" OR "university librarians") AND ("information literacy" OR "IL") AND (Nigeria OR "Nigerian universities") AND (role OR roles OR responsibilities OR functions)
2. ("academic librarians" OR "university librarians") AND ("information literacy instruction" OR "information literacy programs") AND (strategies OR interventions OR approaches OR methods OR initiatives)
3. ("academic librarians" OR "university librarians") AND ("faculty collaboration" OR "collaboration with academics") AND ("information literacy") AND ("higher education" OR universities)
4. ("academic librarians" OR "university librarians") AND ("information literacy programs" OR "IL instruction") AND (challenges OR barriers OR limitations OR constraints OR difficulties)

**Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for the Literature Review**

| Include  | Exclude   |
|--|---|
| Articles published from 2015 onwards and written in English only.  | Studies excluded included articles published before 2015 and non-English publications.                      |
| Articles must be Peer-reviewed empirical studies, case studies, or literature reviews.                                   | The following were excluded: opinion pieces, editorials, book reviews, or unpublished theses/dissertations. |
| Studies conducted in universities or other educational settings in Nigeria.  | Articles outside educational settings.  |
| Documents addressing academic librarians' roles, strategies, collaboration, and challenges in information literacy (IL). | Articles not addressing academic librarians' involvement in information literacy.                           |

Additionally, the thematic analysis was informed by the ACRL Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians Framework, which served as an interpretive guide for categorizing evidence from the reviewed studies. Themes such as instructional roles, collaboration, digital pedagogy, instructional design, and leadership responsibilities were examined in relation to the competencies and domains identified by the

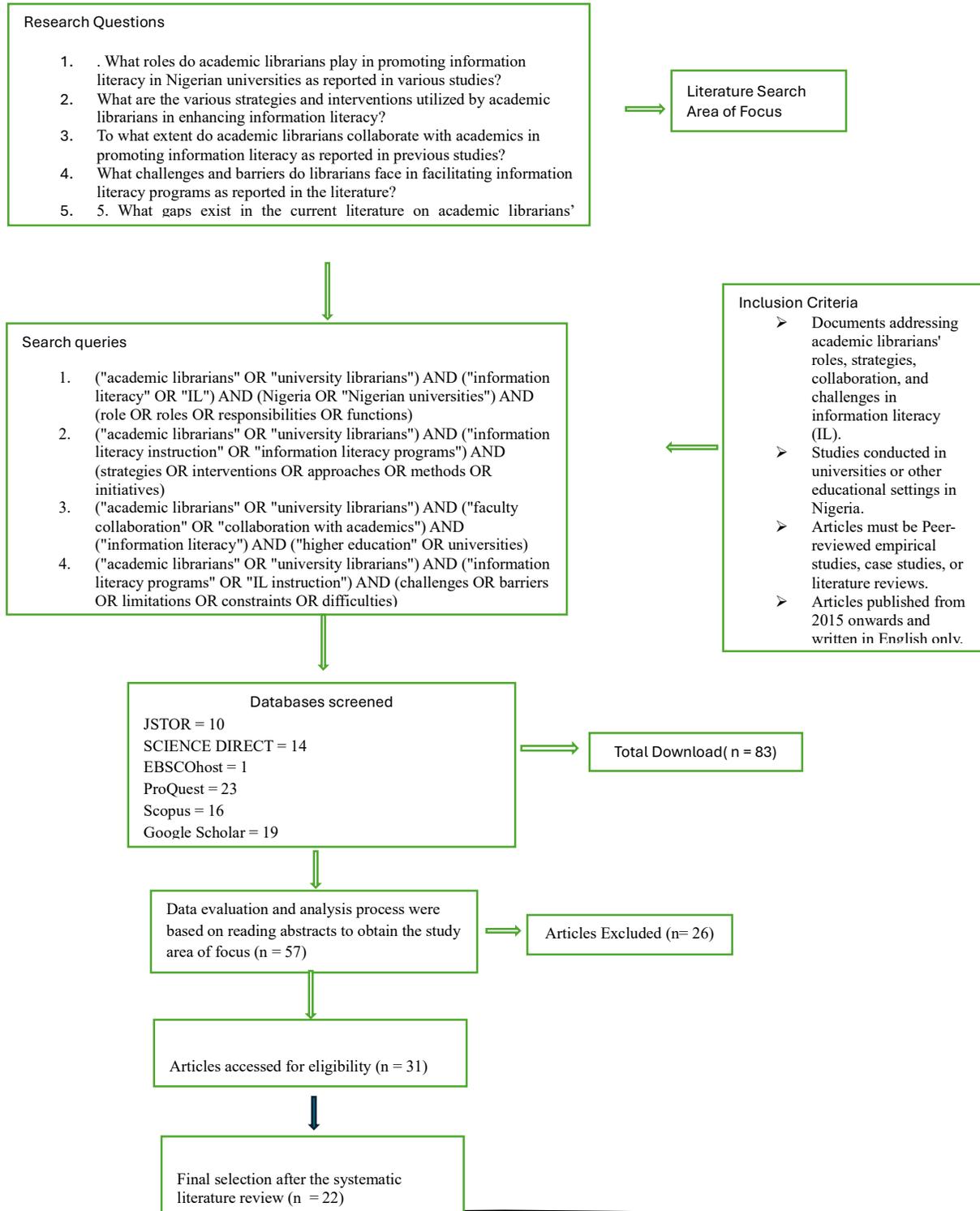
ACRL framework. This ensured that the review not only synthesized the literature descriptively but also interpreted findings through an established pedagogical perspective.

To systematically address the study objectives on The Role of Academic Librarians in Promoting and Enhancing Information Literacy in Nigerian Universities: A Systematic Review of the



Literature, a structured search strategy was employed, as illustrated in Figure 1.

PRISMA Diagram.





The search initially produced 83 downloads. Following data evaluation and analysis, abstracts were screened to ensure alignment with the research questions, resulting in 22 peer-reviewed articles being selected for full review.

**Table 2:** Inclusion and Exclusion Summary

| Criteria                                      | Count |
|---|-------|
| Total Articles Retrieved                      | 83    |
| Articles Meeting Inclusion Criteria           | 23    |
| Articles Excluded (Irrelevant to Study Focus) | 60    |

**Table 3: Summary of Table**

| S/N | Author  | Year | Design   | Key Findings   |
|-----|---|------|--|--|
| 1   | Lami Umar Abdullahi                           | 2023 | Quantitative research method using a cross-sectional design. | The study emphasized that occasional workshops, trial and error approaches and informal learning methods are insufficient for mastering advanced ILS   |
| 2   | Aliyu, Z. B. & Chiwar, M. A.                  | 2019 | Quantitative survey using simple random sampling             | Information literacy enhances students' academic performance by improving their ability to access, evaluate, and use information. Challenges include lack of student motivation, limited orientation time, and uncooperative library staff.      |
| 3   | Aniebo, M. U.                                 | 2024 | Descriptive survey   | Emphasized the roles of knowledge management in academic and identified several challenges as well.  |
| 4   | Anike, A. N., Otubelu, B. N., & Okafor, K. C. | 2024 | Descriptive survey   | Identification and utilization skills are highly applied by students, while search and evaluation skills are applied to a lesser extent.   |
| 5   | Babarinde, E. T. & Adesina, J. A.             | 2023 | Descriptive survey; multi-stage sampling                     | Students face challenges in acquiring information literacy skills due to poor infrastructure, lack of resources, and inadequate library environments. Recommended ICT provision, internet access, and librarian training to enhance utilization. |
| 6   | Dike, V. W. & Amucheazi, O. N.                | 2021 | Descriptive survey   | Barriers to IL education include poor learning environments, lack of resources, language issues, and teacher practices. Advocates using local resources innovatively to overcome these challenges.   |
| 7   | Dime, I. A., Akporhonor, B.                   | 2022 | Descriptive survey   | Focuses on librarians' tech skills   |



|    |  |             |                                       |  |
|----|--|-------------|---------------------------------------|--|
|    | A. & Ogbomo, E. F.                               |             |                                       | and their role in managing electronic resources in South-South Nigerian universities. Full design and findings unavailable due to content access limitations.  |
| 8  | Ikonne, C. N., Ibikunle, G. O. & Babalola, Y. T. | 2023        | Survey design                         | High levels of IL skills among librarians significantly enhance library service delivery. Recommends continuous appraisal and support to maintain effective services   |
| 9  | Imam, A., Okoro, O. J. & Ilori, M. E.            | 2024        | Survey design                         | IL skills significantly influence e-resource usage. High utilization and skill levels observed. Recommends consistent internet access to support e-resource engagement.  |
| 10 | Ojukwu, N. N. C., Mutula, S., & Ochonogor, W. C. | 2022        | Conceptual and policy analysis        | The study explored policy strategies for sustaining electronic information resources (EIRs) in Nigerian academic libraries. It emphasized the need for national policy frameworks, adequate funding, staff training, and collaborative consortia to ensure long-term access and usability of EIRs                      |
| 11 | Onanuga, A. O., Amuda, H. O., & Ilori, O. O.     | 2021        | Survey research; total enumeration    | Most librarians acquired information literacy skills through self-development (98.1%), training (92.6%), and seminars (62.5%). Challenges included irregular training, poor infrastructure, and limited internet access. Recommended integrating IL into library school curricula and addressing infrastructural gaps. |
| 12 | Tella, A.  | 2022        | Qualitative study; purposive sampling | Traditional face-to-face methods dominate IL instruction, but are increasingly supplemented by tools like Google Classroom and tablets. Challenges include power outages, limited access to devices, and funding constraints. Advocates for integrating advanced technologies to modernize IL teaching.                |
| 13 | Ubogu, J. O.                                     | 2022        | Descriptive design                    | High proficient in ICT tools, selective ICT service use had significant impact on job performance. Challenges include; inadequate funding, insufficient ICT infrastructure, shortage of professional trainers.   |
| 14 | <b>Anyaku, Ezeani, &amp; Osuigwe</b>             | <b>2015</b> | Descriptive/qualitative               | IL is delivered informally and embedded within broader academic programs.  |



|     |  |             |                                    |  |
|-----|--|-------------|------------------------------------|--|
|     |  |             |                                    | <p>This informal approach increases accessibility but lacks structure and consistency.</p> <p>Insufficient formalization limits long-term instructional impact.</p>  |
| 15  | Onanuga, Amuda, & Ilori                  | (2019)      | Empirical/descriptive study        | <p>Librarians lead hands-on workshops and regular IL training sessions.</p> <p>Represents a more formal and institutionalized IL instruction model.</p> <p>Shows greater recognition of librarians' pedagogical roles.</p>   |
| 16. | <b>Olanusi, Madukoma, &amp; Babalola</b> | <b>2023</b> | Descriptive study                  | <p>Librarians possess strong ICT and digital literacy skills.</p> <p>ICT competence enhances instructional delivery and online assistance.</p> <p>Digital skills position librarians as essential guides in the digital information landscape.</p>                 |
| 17. | Anyaku                                   | 2016        | Qualitative/descriptive assessment | <p>Librarians understand IL conceptually but struggle with implementation.</p> <p>Institutional barriers include lack of formal IL policies and limited administrative support.</p> <p>Implementation gap persists despite strong theoretical knowledge of IL.</p> |
| 18. | <b>Anunobi &amp; Ukwoma</b>              | <b>2016</b> | Descriptive/qualitative analysis   | <p>Librarians engage in user education that indirectly supports IL.</p> <p>IL practices remain fragmented and poorly integrated into curricula.</p> <p>Study recommends strong IL policy frameworks and continuous professional development.</p>                   |
| 19. | Ikolo                                    | 2020        | Descriptive/qualitative study      | <p>Librarians participate actively in IL-related activities (orientations, sensitization, CAS).</p> <p>Collaboration is informal and</p>   |



|     |               |      |                               |   |
|-----|---------------|------|-------------------------------|---|
|     |               |      |                               | <p>sporadic rather than planned or structured.</p> <p>Institutional culture largely influences the level of collaboration between librarians and faculty.</p> <p>IL support exists but lacks systematic reinforcement or strategic planning.</p>  |
| 20. | Alabi         | 2018 | Descriptive study             | <p>Librarians contribute meaningfully to IL support services.</p> <p>Collaboration tends to be reactive and not embedded within institutional structures.</p> <p>Efforts are constrained by inadequate institutional reinforcement.</p> <p>Points to limited ICT resources and lack of teaching support as major obstacles.</p>   |
| 21. | Lawal & Opara | 2020 | Case study/descriptive study  | <p>Presented a structured, sustained librarian–faculty collaboration.</p> <p>Librarians and law faculty co-developed an online IL tutorial integrated into curriculum.</p> <p>Focused on practical IL skills: database searching, citation, ethical information use.</p> <p>Collaboration improved students’ IL competence and academic performance.</p> <p>Demonstrated high-impact collaboration enabled by strong institutional support.</p> <p>Shows what is possible when IL instruction is embedded, formalized, and jointly delivered.</p> |
| 22. | Adekoya       | 2023 | Qualitative/descriptive study | <p>Librarians acknowledge the benefits of collaboration in theory.</p> <p>Actual collaboration is minimal due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ institutional silos</li> <li>○ role</li> </ul>   |



|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ misconceptions</li> <li>○ absence of formal collaborative structures</li> </ul> <p>Significant gap between intention and practice.</p> <p>Highlights policy gaps and lack of incentives as barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration.</p> |
|--|--|--|--|--|

### Quality Assessment

The selection process was followed by the assessment of articles, which was based on Kmet, Cook, and Lee's (2004) criteria for assessing the quality of both qualitative and quantitative studies.

1. Is the question / objective sufficiently described?
2. Study design evident and appropriate?
3. Is the method of selecting the source of information described and appropriate?
4. Sample size appropriate?
5. Sampling strategy described, relevant and justified?
6. Are data collection methods clearly described and systematic?
7. Is data analysis clearly described and systematic?
8. Are the conclusions supported by the results?

### Results

This section presents the analysis based on the 5 proposed research questions.

#### Instructional Roles

In several studies, librarians are portrayed as central figures in IL instruction, often conducting sensitization sessions, orientation programs, and general studies lectures. For instance, Anyaoku, Ezeani, and Osuigwe (2015) describe a model where IL is delivered informally, embedded within broader academic programs. This approach, while accessible, lacks the structure and consistency needed for sustained impact. In contrast, Onanuga, Amuda, and Ilori (2019) present a more formalized instructional model, where librarians lead hands-on workshops and regular training sessions. This structured engagement reflects a more institutionalized recognition of librarians' pedagogical roles and suggests a shift toward integrating IL into the academic fabric.

Digital literacy emerges as a critical enabler of effective IL instruction. Olanusi, Madukoma, and

Babalola (2023) highlight librarians' strong ICT skills, particularly in database searching and online assistance. These competencies not only enhance instructional delivery but also position librarians as vital navigators in the digital information landscape. However, the presence of digital skills alone does not guarantee effective IL implementation. Anyaoku (2016) underscores a significant gap between librarians' conceptual understanding of IL and their ability to implement it. Despite recognizing IL as a set of skills essential for ethical and effective information use, librarians face institutional barriers such as the absence of formal IL policies and limited administrative support.

This tension between perception and practice is echoed by Anunobi and Ukwoma (2016), who note that while librarians engage in user education that indirectly promotes IL, these efforts are often fragmented and lack curriculum integration. Their study calls for robust policy frameworks and continuous professional development to empower librarians to fully assume their instructional roles.



Across all studies, librarians are consistently shown to support both students and faculty in accessing, evaluating, and using information resources. Whether through guiding users to credible academic sources or teaching search strategies, their instructional contributions are evident. Yet, these efforts are frequently undermined by systemic challenges. Infrastructural limitations such as inadequate ICT tools, irregular power supply, and poor access to resources are recurrent themes. Moreover, the absence of national IL policies and institutional awareness further restricts the scope and effectiveness of librarians' instructional roles.

While Nigerian academic librarians demonstrate a strong conceptual alignment with IL and possess the digital skills necessary for its delivery, their instructional potential remains constrained by institutional and infrastructural barriers. Bridging this gap requires not only administrative support and policy development but also a cultural shift that recognizes IL as a core academic competency and librarians as essential educators within the university ecosystem

When interpreted through the ACRL Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians Framework, the roles performed by Nigerian academic librarians reflect several core areas of the framework particularly teacher, instructional designer, collaborator, and advocate for information literacy. However, strengths in areas such as leadership, curriculum integration, and digital pedagogy appear underdeveloped due to infrastructural and institutional constraints. This alignment and divergence indicate that while Nigerian librarians demonstrate strong foundational instructional intentions, the absence of supportive policies and resources limits their ability to fully enact the teaching competencies envisioned by the ACRL framework.

### Strategies and Interventions

Academic librarians in Nigeria have embraced a variety of strategic approaches to enhance information literacy (IL) among students, reflecting a shift from traditional, isolated instruction to more integrated, dynamic, and responsive models. Through interpretive

synthesis, these strategies can be understood not merely as isolated innovations, but as interconnected responses to evolving educational needs, technological advancements, and institutional challenges.

One of the most significant transformations has been the integration of IL instruction into core and elective courses. This embedded approach contrasts with the older model of standalone library sessions, which often existed on the periphery of academic programs. By situating IL within disciplinary contexts, librarians ensure that students acquire critical skills such as sourcing, evaluating, and ethically using information while engaging directly with their academic content. Imam, Okoro, and Ilori (2024) provide compelling evidence of this strategy's effectiveness, noting that students in Lagos State universities demonstrated marked improvement in their use of electronic resources when IL was woven into their coursework. This suggests that contextualized learning not only enhances skill acquisition but also fosters deeper engagement with information practices.

Complementing this curricular integration is the strategic use of digital platforms, a trend accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nigerian academic librarians have increasingly adopted virtual tools such as webinars, online tutorials, and asynchronous learning modules to deliver IL instruction. These digital modalities have expanded access, enabling both on-campus and remote learners to benefit from IL training. Imam et al. (2024) again highlight the positive outcomes of this shift, reporting significant gains in students' IL competencies and engagement with digital resources. This move toward digital instruction reflects a broader pedagogical evolution, where flexibility, accessibility, and technological fluency are prioritized.

Another critical pillar of IL enhancement in Nigeria is the professional development of librarians themselves. Recognizing that effective IL instruction requires more than subject knowledge, institutions have invested in capacity-building initiatives. Onanuga, Amuda, and Ilori (2019) emphasize the impact of workshops and seminars in equipping librarians with skills in



critical thinking facilitation, instructional design, and digital resource management. These competencies have translated into more robust and pedagogically sound IL sessions, reinforcing the idea that empowered librarians are central to successful IL programs.

Equally important is the emphasis on assessment and evaluation. Nigerian academic libraries have begun to institutionalize feedback mechanisms such as surveys, quizzes, and reflective tools—to gauge the effectiveness of IL instruction. Abdullahi (2023) underscores the value of these evaluations, particularly in postgraduate settings where students often come from diverse educational backgrounds. Tailoring IL instruction to meet varied needs requires ongoing assessment, ensuring that programs remain responsive and inclusive.

Comparatively, these strategies curricular integration, digital delivery, librarian training, and systematic evaluation represent a cohesive and evolving framework for IL development. While each approach addresses a distinct dimension of IL instruction, together they form a synergistic model that enhances both reach and impact. The shift from peripheral to embedded instruction, from in-person to digital platforms, and from ad hoc to evidence-based practice illustrates a maturing IL landscape in Nigerian higher education. This evolution not only reflects librarians' adaptability but also signals a growing institutional recognition of IL as a foundational academic competency.

### **Collaboration Patterns**

Across the reviewed studies, a consistent theme emerges, academic librarians in Nigerian universities demonstrate a strong willingness to collaborate with faculty in promoting and enhancing information literacy (IL). However, the nature, depth, and institutional support for such collaboration vary significantly, revealing a spectrum of engagement that ranges from informal support to structured instructional partnerships.

Ikolo (2020) and Alabi (2018) both highlight librarians' active involvement in IL-related activities such as sensitization sessions, user

orientation, and Current Awareness Services. These forms of collaboration, while valuable, tend to be informal and sporadic. Ikolo notes that the extent of collaboration is often shaped by the university's internal culture and policies, suggesting that institutional context plays a critical role in determining how librarians and faculty interact. Alabi similarly observes that while librarians contribute meaningfully to IL support, their efforts lack systemic reinforcement, making collaboration more reactive than strategic.

In contrast, Lawal and Opara (2020) present a compelling example of structured and sustained collaboration. At the University of Jos, librarians partnered with law faculty to co-develop an online IL tutorial embedded within the academic curriculum. This initiative focused on practical IL competencies such as database searching, citation, and ethical information use. The collaboration was not only formalized but also integrated into coursework, resulting in improved IL outcomes and enhanced academic performance among students. This model stands out as a high-impact approach, demonstrating the transformative potential of librarian–faculty partnerships when supported by institutional commitment.

Adekoya (2023) offers a more critical perspective, examining collaboration between librarians and LIS faculty in southwestern Nigeria. While librarians acknowledged the benefits of joint research and curriculum development, actual collaboration was minimal. Institutional silos, role misconceptions, and the absence of formal structures were cited as major barriers. This study underscores the gap between collaborative intent and execution, revealing how systemic constraints can stifle even the most promising partnerships.

All four studies converge on the point that infrastructural and institutional support are essential for successful collaboration. Ikolo and Alabi point to limited teaching resources and inadequate ICT infrastructure as persistent obstacles. Adekoya adds that policy gaps and the lack of administrative incentives further hinder interdisciplinary collaboration. These challenges



suggest that while librarians are eager to engage, their efforts are often constrained by external factors beyond their control.

Comparatively, Lawal and Opara's study distinguishes itself by demonstrating what is possible when collaboration is intentional, structured, and embedded within academic programs. Unlike the other studies, which depict collaboration as peripheral or inconsistent, this model illustrates the effectiveness of co-designed IL instruction and the value of sustained partnerships.

Through interpretive synthesis, it becomes clear that collaboration between librarians and faculty in Nigerian universities is both desired and necessary, but its success depends heavily on institutional frameworks, resource availability, and mutual recognition of roles. Moving forward, fostering structured collaboration will require deliberate policy interventions, investment in infrastructure, and a cultural shift that positions librarians as integral contributors to academic development and student success.

The findings also reveal that many activities undertaken by Nigerian academic librarians correspond with the competencies outlined in the ACRL Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians Framework. For instance, librarians actively demonstrate the roles of teacher, instructional partner, and digital pedagogy facilitator. However, gaps in institutional leadership, curriculum integration, and instructional design capacity indicate that the full spectrum of teaching-librarian strengths is not yet realised within Nigerian universities. This suggests that systemic support, formalised IL policies, and targeted professional development are necessary for librarians to embody the broader leadership and pedagogical roles articulated in the ACRL framework.

### Challenges

Academic librarians in Nigerian universities encounter a complex array of challenges in their efforts to promote information literacy (IL), with these obstacles spanning linguistic, institutional, pedagogical, and technological domains. Through interpretive synthesis, these challenges

can be understood not as isolated issues but as interrelated constraints that collectively shape the landscape of IL instruction.

One of the most pervasive barriers is linguistic and literacy-related. Dike and Amucheazi (2021) emphasize that many Nigerian university students struggle with English language proficiency and academic reading skills both of which are foundational for engaging with IL concepts such as information evaluation, ethical use, and source credibility. This linguistic limitation not only affects comprehension but also undermines students' ability to apply IL skills in academic contexts. The challenge here is not simply about language, but about the cognitive readiness required to navigate complex information environments.

Closely tied to this is the rigidity of the academic curriculum, which often marginalizes IL instruction. Aniebo (2020) points out that IL is rarely offered as a credit-bearing or compulsory course in Nigerian universities. As a result, IL education remains peripheral, lacking the institutional recognition that would elevate its status among students and faculty. Without formal curricular integration, IL is perceived as supplementary rather than essential, reducing student engagement and limiting its pedagogical impact.

Resistance from stakeholders further compounds these challenges. Aliyu and Ciwar (2021) observe that both faculty and students may undervalue IL instruction, particularly when it is not directly linked to academic assessments. At the American University of Nigeria, for example, students showed low participation in IL programs, viewing them as non-essential to their academic success. This perception reflects a broader issue: the lack of awareness or appreciation for the librarian's instructional expertise, which in turn hinders collaboration between librarians and academic staff.

The issue of professional capacity also emerges as a critical concern. Onanuga, Amuda, and Ilori (2020) report that many librarians in South-Western Nigeria acquire IL instructional skills informally through workshops or self-study due



to the absence of structured training programs. This ad hoc approach affects the consistency and quality of IL instruction, leaving librarians underprepared to deliver comprehensive and pedagogically sound IL education. The lack of formal professional development opportunities not only limits individual growth but also weakens institutional IL initiatives.

Technological constraints present yet another formidable barrier. Poor internet connectivity, unreliable electricity, and limited access to digital devices are common across many Nigerian universities. Babarinde and Adesina (2023) highlight the underdeveloped state of digital infrastructure, which restricts both the delivery and accessibility of IL programs. Anike, Otubelu, and Okafor (2024) expand on this, citing a host of interrelated challenges including inadequate technological facilities, irregular training, and low national development levels that collectively impair the IL capabilities of information professionals.

Comparatively, these studies reveal a pattern of systemic neglect and fragmentation. While each challenge be it linguistic, curricular, collaborative, professional, or technological poses its own threat to IL promotion, their combined effect is a deeply constrained instructional environment. The interpretive synthesis underscores that these issues are not merely operational but structural, requiring coordinated interventions at multiple levels.

To overcome these barriers, Nigerian universities must adopt a holistic strategy that includes curricular reform, stakeholder sensitisation, investment in digital infrastructure, and sustained professional development for librarians. Only through such integrated efforts can academic librarians be empowered to deliver effective IL instruction and equip students with the critical information skills needed to thrive in the digital age

### Gaps in the literature

While several studies, such as Lawal and Opara (2020) successfully collaborated with faculty to design and implement an online IL tutorial for students, there is limited empirical research on the long-term impact of the web-based tutorial on students' IL skills and academic success. Additionally, most evidence is based on short-term observations or one-off interventions. They would have evaluated the IL tutorial to monitor and discover the impact on students IL skills.

Another gap is that the reviewed literature tends to treat IL instruction as a generic skill set, with little attention paid to disciplinary and subject-specific contexts. There is a gap in exploring how librarians can tailor IL instruction to various subject fields such as science, engineering, social sciences, or humanities, however Lawal and Opara (2020) showed evidence of this with the web-based tutorial they developed for law students.

There is insufficient Integration of IL into formal curricula. Although most studies indicated librarians' contributions to IL, few investigated how these efforts are institutionally formalised. There is a lack of data on how IL is embedded and incorporated into university courses. Most studies focus on librarians' views with minimal inclusion of academics' viewpoints on collaboration. As a result, there is limited understanding of academics' views, readiness, or reservations in co-designing or co-teaching IL instructional programs within their courses. Several studies highlight librarians' instructional roles, but they do not go further to evaluate student IL skills after IL sessions, to discover if improvements have been achieved and areas for further improvement. This creates a gap in measuring IL program effectiveness.

### Discussion

The literature review shows that academic librarians in Nigerian higher institutions are actively involved in promoting and enhancing information literacy, mainly through Library orientation programs, workshops, and increasingly, structured IL instructional activities. Their roles in IL instructions include digital literacy support and guiding both students and



academics in searching and evaluating information resources. However, limitations in ICT facilities and poor power supply continue to hinder these efforts.

The various strategies used to enhance IL include incorporating IL instruction within students' courses and librarian capacity-building through workshops and training. These approaches have increased IL awareness and reach among students, this is shown by the improved use of electronic resources.

A key finding relates to the extent of collaboration between librarians and academic staff, which are different across institutions. While some research papers like that of Lawal and Opara, (2020) reported strong, collaborations and partnership leading to positive IL results and outcomes, others indicated informal and inconsistent engagement. Barriers like poor support from universities, rigid curriculum and unclear job roles hinder librarians and academics' partnership.

In the aspects of challenges, librarians face reluctance from both academics and students, few standard training opportunities, and Inadequate facilities. Language barriers and the exclusion of IL as a credit-bearing course further reduce its importance to students and academics. The literature review also discovered a lack of standardised evaluation practices to assess the IL program's impact on student IL skills and academic performance.

Several gaps were also noted, minimal attention to evaluation of IL program, lack of subject-specific IL instructions, insufficient incorporation of IL into courses and few empirical data capturing academics' views on collaboration and partnership. Most studies focus on librarians' perspectives, with few triangulations from faculty or students. Contradictions and variations across the reviewed studies reveal that information literacy (IL) practices in Nigerian higher institutions are far from uniform, with differences emerging across institutional types, regions, and internal administrative cultures. While some universities, such as the University of Jos, reported by Lawal and Opara (2020), demonstrate structured, curriculum-embedded IL programs

supported by strong librarian and faculty collaboration, many others rely on informal and sporadic approaches like orientations and occasional workshops, as seen in studies by Ikolo (2020) and Alabi (2018). These inconsistencies are further shaped by disparities in infrastructure: better-resourced public institutions often display more consistent IL activities, whereas poorly funded universities continue to struggle with inadequate ICT tools, unreliable power supply, and an absence of IL-supportive policies. Regional trends also appear, with some northern institutions showing stronger collaborative cultures, while studies from the southwest, such as Adekoya (2023), highlight institutional silos, limited collaboration, and policy gaps that restrict IL implementation. Although librarians across regions possess strong digital and conceptual IL skills, studies like Anyaoku (2016) show that these competencies do not always translate into effective IL instruction due to structural and administrative barriers. Additionally, while some institutions report improved use of electronic resources, the lack of standardised evaluation practices means that IL outcomes are not consistently measured. Student and faculty engagement also varies, especially where IL is not credit-bearing or formally recognised within the curriculum. Collectively, these contradictions point to an uneven IL landscape in Nigeria, where the success of IL initiatives largely depends on institutional culture, infrastructural capacity, regional context, and the strength of librarian and faculty partnerships.

## **Conclusion**

This systematic review highlights the evolving role of academic librarians in advancing and supporting information literacy in Nigerian higher institutions. While there is a robust foundation of engagement, especially in IL digital resource support from publications written in the year 2015 to 2025, the success and impact of these efforts lies in working together and having good polices. To enhance IL education in Nigeria, collaboration between librarians and faculty staff should be formalized, the university's policies must support IL integration into the curriculum, and continuous evaluation mechanisms should be



developed to track student improvements. Future research should center on subject-specific IL programs and instructions, evaluation of IL programs developed and inclusion of various stakeholder views, in order to build a more robust understanding of IL practices, outcomes and improvements in Nigerian higher education context.

Additionally, applying the ACRL Roles and Strengths of Teaching Librarians Framework highlights areas where Nigerian academic librarians already exhibit strong teaching-related competencies, as well as areas requiring further development, especially instructional design, leadership, and digital pedagogy. Strengthening IL instruction in Nigerian universities will therefore require not only improved infrastructure and collaboration, but also intentional efforts to support librarians in achieving the full teaching-librarian profile established by ACRL.

## References

- Alabi, A. O. (2018). Bridging the Great Divide: Librarian-faculty Collaboration in Selected Higher Institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. DOI:10.1016/j.acalib.2018.05.004
- Abdullahi, L. U. (2023). Facilitating the information literacy skills of postgraduate students of public universities in North Geopolitical Zones of Nigeria. *Middle Belt Journal of Library and Information Science*, 21. Retrieved from <https://mbjlisonline.org/index.php/jlis/article/view/193>
- Adekoya C., O. (2023). Research collaboration among library and information science professionals in Nigerian universities. *Library Management* 14 November 2023; 44 (8-9): 536–545. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LM-07-2023-0062>
- Aliyu, Z. B., & Chiwar, M. A. Impact of Information Literacy on Students' Academic Performance: The Case of American University of Nigeria (AUN), Yola, Adamawa State. <https://icidr.org.ng/index.php/Jres/article/view/1492>
- Aniebo, M.U (2024). Challenges of Knowledge Management in Academic Libraries in Nigeria. (2024). *Nigerian Library and Information Science Trends*, 6(1&2), 1-7. <https://nlist.net.ng/index.php/nlist/article/view/71>
- Anike, A. N., Otubelu, B. N., & Okafor, K. C. (2024). Extent of Application of Information Literacy Skills among Undergraduates of Library and Information Science in Public Universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Knowledge dissemination (IJKD)*, 5(2), 1-13. <https://ijkd.uniabuja.edu.ng/index.php/ijkd/article/view/107>
- Anunobi, C. V., & Ukwoma, S. C. (2016). Information literacy in Nigerian universities: Trends, challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Information Research*, 6(1), 1–15.
- Anyaoku, E. N. (2016). Librarians' conceptions of information literacy in three federal universities in South East Nigeria: Implications for effective implementations of information literacy programmes. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, Article 1357.
- Anyaoku, E. N., Ezeani, C. N., & Osuigwe, N. E. C. (2015). *Information literacy practices of librarians in universities in South East Nigeria*. *International Journal of Library and Information Science*, 7(5), 96–102. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJLIS2014.0489>
- Babarinde, E. T., & Adesina, J. A. (2023). Students' Information Literacy Skill Acquisition: Challenges and Strategies for Enhancement of its Utilization. *International Journal of Applied Technologies in Library and Information Management*, 9(1), 60-68.



- <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jatlimi/article/view/267612>
- CILIP (2018) *Information Literacy definition*. Available at: <https://infolit.org.uk/new-il-definition/>
- Dike, V. W., & Amucheazi, O. N. (2021, October). Information literacy education in Nigeria: breaking down barriers through local resources. In *IASL Annual Conference Proceedings*. <https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/slw/index.php/iasl/article/view/7546>
- Dime, I. A., Akporhonor, B. A., & Ogbomo, E. F. (2022). Librarians' technology skills and management of electronic information resources in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. *EduLib*, 18(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.17509/edulib.v18i1.62998>
- Ikolo, V. E., (2020). Perceptions of librarians and library and information science educators towards collaboration and promotion of information literacy in Nigeria. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science* 30(2), 165-180.
- Ikonne, C. N., Ibikunle, G. O., & Babalola, Y. T. (2023). Information literacy skills as factors influencing library service delivery in public universities in South-West, Nigeria. *Communicate: Journal of Library and Information Science*, 25(1), 32–45. Retrieved from <https://www.cjolis.org/index.php/cjolis/article/view/22>
- Imam, A., Okoro, O. J., & Ilori, M. E. (2024). Information literacy skills and use of electronic resources by undergraduates in selected public university libraries in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Gateway Information Journal*, 25(1), 37–55. Retrieved from <https://www.gatewayinfojournal.org/index.php/gij/article/view/43>
- Lawal, V. & Opara O. S. (2020) Librarian-Faculty Collaboration in Information Literacy Instruction: Experiences from the University of Jos Law Library <https://mbjlisonline.org/index.php/jlis/article/view/35>
- Ojukwu, N. N. C., Mutula, S., & Ochonogor, W. C. (2022). An exploration of policy strategies for sustainable EIRs in academic libraries in Nigeria. *American Journal of Information Science and Technology*, 6(2), 16–23. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajist.20220602.11>
- Onanuga, A. O., Amuda, H. O., & Ilori, O. O. (2019). Assessment of information literacy skills of librarians in selected academic libraries in South-Western Nigeria. *Journal of Library, Science Education and Learning Technology*, 1(2), 62-125. <https://www.alhikmah.edu.ng/jolselt/index.php/ajemc/article/view/48>
- Olanusi, A. E., Madukoma, E. & Babalola, Y. T. (2023). Influence of information communication technology skills on research output of academic librarians in public universities in South-West Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*.
- Tella, A. (2022). Teaching information literacy in Nigerian universities using advanced technologies. *Regional Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, 7(2), 38–53. <https://doi.org/10.70759/87ke2s63>
- Ubogu, J. O. (2022). The influence of ICT competencies on job performance in Nigerian university libraries. *Asian Journal of Information Science and Technology*, 12(2), 3350. <https://doi.org/10.51983/ajist-2022.12.2.3350>