Focused Training for University Students in the Use of the Library's Electronic Databases

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Abstract:

Sidney Martin Library at The University of The West Indies, Cave Hill campus provides access to several online databases for staff and students in support of the various programmes offered by the campus. As part of the library's Information Literacy sessions for first year students some training in the use of its online databases is provided; however, an examination of use revealed that these resources are not being used as widely as would be desired. This is evident from the low usage statistics for several databases. In addition, based on comments from the influx of students when assignments are due, it seems that they are unaware of the electronic resources available to them to support studies in their particular fields. The implication is that the sensitization and training session provided for new students may not be the most effective way of encouraging students to make use of the electronic resources to which they have access, and that other approaches should be sought. It was therefore felt that a more targeted, context-specific approach may provide the students with the information needed to encourage them to access the electronic resources. To this end, a programme of training, adaptable to specific students' course/ assignments needs was developed and piloted among students taking specific courses (at the request of the lecturers) and in the library among students who responded to circularized advertisement. Students participating in the training were encouraged to bring their own devices so that they could learn how to access the resources from the devices that they would normally use.

After each training session, data were collected from students to determine their views/perceptions on the usefulness of the course of training provided to improve their knowledge and use of the available online resources. The results from the analysis of these data suggest that such focus programmes of training could be useful in expanding the use of the library's resources by students. The paper reports students' views and perception of the training; their recommendations for the improvement of the programme; and their follow up activities. It also reports on actions taken, based on the piloting of the training programme, to address the issue of underuse of the library's electronic resources.