

Establish the information seeking behaviour of visually impaired students in accessing digital information resources

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Abstract

Information is power, a very important and valuable commodity in everyday human activities. This is evidenced by the current digital divide that equal access to information is essential to the development of an information society which also applies to people with disability. The study aimed to establish the information seeking behaviour of visually impaired students in accessing digital information resources with special reference to University of Nairobi library services. The study was guided by the following objectives; establish information seeking behaviour by students with visual impairment in accessing digital resources; determine how existing adaptive and assistive technology impact students with visual impairment in accessing digital information resources; identify the challenges that mitigate the needs of visually impaired students when accessing the digital resources and to propose possible strategies to mitigate the challenges that VI students face while accessing the digital resources. The total population for the study comprised two units of analysis which were 32 visually impaired students and 6 librarians in charge of the visually impaired students. The study surveyed using questionnaires and observation protocol. The researcher observed keenly the behaviour of the VI students on how they interact with the adaptive/assistive technology; how they seek the information and the challenges to its access. This was achieved through the use of an observation protocol instrument. The observation results were used to complement questionnaires from both the digital librarians and the VI students. The study employed Wilson's (1999) Theory of Information Behaviour Model which provided a framework for mapping and understanding student's information patterns. SPSS version 25 was used to analyse the data. The response rate was 78.95% from all the units of analysis. The results indicated that the majority 72% were female. Similarly, the results revealed that most VI students were getting assistance from a sighted person or by using computers, speech synthesizers, screen readers, brail prints, and audiobooks. The study revealed that a smaller number used a mobile app called Tap Tap. The findings also indicated that the UON library services for digital resources for VI which were inadequate. Although most of the VI students had attended training or workshops, they faced several challenges which include; a limited number of learning materials, the slowness of VI students in grasping/typing information, inadequate electronic knowledge and skills, lack of support from the librarians, negative attitude from their peers, financial challenges, inadequate digital skills, lack of motivation among students, small learning space, failure to see facial expressions, mobility problems, and poor network.