

Research by practitioners and the use of research literature by LIS practitioners in Australia

Abstract:

Evidence-based practice in the field of library and information science has been around for more than a decade and so far a journal, a series of conferences and a book has been devoted to the subject. However, there are still issues. The focus of most of the existing studies and literature on the subject has been on health information professionals (Roddham, 2004). On the other hand, LIS research literature, at least in some areas such as information behaviour, seems to be useless for the purpose of practice (Case, 2012). We still do not have a complete knowledge about the level of involvement of library and information professionals (practitioners in general) in the production of LIS research literature and about the status and barriers of the use of research literature by practitioners. Given the background above, this study aims to address these two issues in the Australian context. The study, therefore, has two aims. First it seeks to determine the extent to which Australian library and information professionals produce research literature, specifically journal articles. The second is to explore the status of the use of research literature by LIS professionals as evidence for their practice and identify the existing barriers, if any, for their use. For the first part of the study all articles published in 2015 with at least one author affiliated to Australian institutions (a total of 182 articles authored by 471 authors) were retrieved from Web of Science (category of Information Science and Library Science). Then all author's affiliation and job position are checked by looking at the information available in the paper or searching the authors on the web, to see what percentage of authors are non-academic and are practitioners. The preliminary results shows that the involvement of practitioners in producing journal articles is very low.

For the second part of the study semi-structured interviews (face-to-face or through Skype) are done with a purposive sample of LIS professionals up to the point of theoretical data saturation. The sampling aims to increase data diversity so professionals from different sectors including public library, academic library, special libraries, school libraries, archives and those working in private sectors are included. The data are analysed using thematic analysis technique. The interviews are currently being done and they cover issues related to their level of the use of LIS research literature, reasons for use and /or non-use of the literature. Expectations of practitioners from the research literature and attributes that they think the literature should have are identified. Also to some extent it is become clear whether there is a gap between issues practitioners want to be addressed in research and those addressed by researchers and academics in their studies. The study clarifies how useful research literature are for practitioners and what role it plays as evidence in their practice. The preliminary results of this stage shows that practitioners mainly rely on commissioned research rather than journal articles. Although some of them monitor journal articles, a few issues make journal articles less useful for them including delay in the publication process and the issues that are addressed in studied presented in journal articles. Listserves and mailing lists, and professional bodies play an important role in identification and dissemination of research output that practitioners find useful for their work. The key criteria for them to find a study useful is its topic, whether it is on

something they are interested in. They increasingly find qualitative studies more helpful as they provide context for the data.

Keywords: Evidence based practice, LIS research, Australia, research literature

Case, D. O. (2012). *Looking for information: A survey of research on information seeking, needs and behavior*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Roddham, M. (2004). Evidence-based practice for information professionals: a handbook. *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, 21(4), 276-277.

Note: Data collection and data analysis is being conducted. I have preliminary results but by the end of November I should have the final results to present in the conference.