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Assessment of Information Literacy Skills among Feni University Students

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Abstract: This study aims to assess the information literacy skills of Feni University students. The study discusses the present status of the practice of information literacy program and information competency of the students. Information literacy encompasses more than good information-seeking behavior. It incorporates the abilities to recognize when information is needed and then to phrase questions designed to gather the needed information. It includes evaluating and then using information appropriately and ethically. The findings present the original insights concerning the practice of information literacy program in Feni university library and student's information literacy skills. The study found that, information literacy is very much important for university students and must be included into the graduate program. Most of the students urged that the library authority should immediately start information literacy program and continue regularly.

Keywords: Information Literacy, User Education Program, Information Seeking Behavior, University Library, Information Resources.

Introduction:

The society of the 21st century depends on access to and use of information for its decision-making, growth and development. This has resulted into an information explosion, produced in multiple media. Library and Information Center (LIC) professionals have the task of handling the information explosion and delivering the right kind of information services to the right users at the right time. LIC professionals are expected to guide the users for using the right information and develop the skill of users. The academic library plays a vital role in the development of a student as information-literate persons, and serves to assist an institution of higher education in achieving this goal through the provision of instructional programming.

Information literacy and competency is the ability to identify information needs, seek out resources to meet those needs, and then analyze, evaluate, synthesize and communicate the resulting knowledge. It is a core instructional pedagogy in higher education. People who recognize their own need for good information, and who have the skills to identify, access, evaluate, synthesize and apply the needed information are thus information literate (ACRL, 2001).

Information literacy has broader perspectives and applications. It includes user education, library orientation, bibliographic instruction, online searching techniques, OPAC searching techniques, card catalogue searching techniques, web-based literacy, media literacy, computer literacy, and many more. This is an educational and societal issue, and cooperative efforts of the government, nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions; community information centers and academic/professional associations are to be involved.

Whereas historically libraries focus on the search-process, IL also involves the basis of every search viz. formulating a topic and formulating the right questions to answer the actual information need. Preparation of a search is very important to decide whether found information is useful or not. IL also focuses on the effective use of found information, e.g. writing an article or giving a lecture (Singh, 2009).

The world over, universities are trying to implement IL programs to enable their students to cope with the current information proliferation, improve their educational performance and enable their students to compete favorably in the information society. As libraries are involved in a number of ways in supporting teaching and research in terms of resourcing, reading material, facilitating use of these materials and providing collaborative focus for partnership with other institutions they play an important role in promoting information literacy of the students and staff members (Birch, 2012).

Information literacy presents a broad approach that offers the opportunity to educate students to understand the importance of information, and have the competence to locate, evaluate and manage it. In that way, information literacy contributes towards a higher level of literacy and lifelong learning. It can be argued therefore that students become information literate when they are comfortable in using all information formats independently and when they are able to evaluate and base decisions on information

obtained. It is in this vein that students should be empowered to be literate and comfortable in using information available in printed and in electronic formats.

In the present age of information technology, it is essential for university students to develop the skills of independent information searching, evaluating and utilizing all available sources of information. Many graduate or even undergraduate programs in both public and private universities in Bangladesh do not offer or provide formal information literacy training that could equip students with the skills necessary to fulfill the current information need as well as fill future information needs.

Literature Review

Boekhorst (2003) conducted a study which showed that all definitions and descriptions of information literacy presented over the years can be summarized in three concepts: The ICT concept which refers to the competence with which to use ICT to retrieve and disseminate information. The information resources concept, this refers to the competence to find and use information independently or with the aid of intermediaries, and finally, the information process concept of information literacy, which refers to the process of recognizing the information need, retrieving, evaluating, using and disseminating of information to acquire or extend knowledge.

Salam and Islam (2009) focused on an exclusive work entitled "Information literacy: perceptions and skills of graduates of the Institute of Education and Research" where they carried out to assess the IL perceptions and skills of the graduates of the Institute of Education and Research (IER) and also give focuses to determine their strength and weakness. They also mentioned that students had limited skills in the area of IL. They urged that incorporation of IL concepts and courses in the curriculum of IER could be widening the scope of IER graduates to be more information literate.

Ranaweera (2010) conducted a study entitled "Information Literacy Programmes conducted by the Universities in Sri Lanka" where he stated that, the value of information literacy programmes conducted by the universities in Sri Lanka in order to achieve the higher level of learning in the university sector; with special reference to Sri Lankan universities, with the focus on Outcome Space. The outcome space information literacy framework runs through Information sources, Information Technology, Information Control, Information Processing, Knowledge construction, Knowledge Extension and Wisdom as explained by Christine Bruce. Further the paper elucidates the information literacy initiatives commenced by the libraries of the University of Colombo, University of Kelaniya, University of Moratuwa, University of Sri Jayewardenapura and National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (NILIS). The survey results reveal that the information literacy programmes initiated by the university libraries and the Institute range from user orientation to the credit based programmes. All the university libraries that were chosen for this study had commenced some sort of information literacy programme. But most of the programmes are at the lower level of the outcome space. Two university libraries and the Institute had tried to initiate outcome space information literacy programmes. Islam and Tsuji (2010) carried out a comprehensive work entitled "assessing information literacy competency of Information Science and Library Management (ISLM) graduate students of Dhaka University" in which they shown that the IL competency of Information Science and Library Management (ISLM) graduate students at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and to determine their strengths and weaknesses. They also found that students had limited 'skills in the area of IL, as it is not discussed extensively in their academic course curriculum. They urge the incorporation of an IL program in the course curriculum and more writing, discussion and other relevant issues that will make the students more information literate.

Chowdhury, Islam & Islam (2011) conducted a research on "The Information literacy Education Readiness of Central Public Library (CPL) in Dhaka of Bangladesh" in which they examine whether the Central Public library in Dhaka is ready to assume an enhanced responsibility for information literacy education. They also focused that the CPL in Bangladesh has shortcomings in information literacy education programmes due to lack of physical facilities, absence of information retrieval tools and low level of professional education of public library staff. They also argued that the recognition that present approaches are not meeting the requirements of users and more effective system with experienced educator is required.

Shoeb (2013) carried out a research where he observed that students more or less have used information for their purposes. He focused on students' detail behavior regarding different information literacy statements of awareness defining information needs and findings as per their needs, evaluating and organizing information as per requirement, presenting in correct form and using it fairly. He also observed that most of the respondents have no idea about information literacy; either they have not planned before formally to use information systematically, or even they did not find IL necessary or important to solve their problem earlier.

Objective of the Study

- To examine the information literacy and competency level of university students.
- To elicit the knowledge of modern communication tools related to Information technology.
- To identify the critical and analytical skills of students in order to use information appropriately and judiciously.
- To ascertain the significance of information literacy education and training program among students.

Scope of the Study

The study mainly focuses on the Information literacy skills of students in identifying, locating, searching, accessing, retrieving and using information from both print and electronic sources of information. The sample of this study covers 86 students out of the 100 respondents' assessment of information literacy skills.

Justification of the study:

Today university students are facing various challenges in their institutions or university libraries relating to information access and effective use of it. Information has become such an important resource that every work place requires relevant and current information, promptly delivered by its employees to their superiors, colleagues and knowledge seekers. The IL programs offered by the information professionals to their students and IL skills and competency of both library staff members and university students have not been explored yet. This research has attempted to identify the IL programs offered to Feni university students and to determine their IL competency level and IL knowledge and skills.

Significance of the study:

From the academic perspective, the result of the study will help universities to assess the effectiveness of their IL programs on students and consolidate what is retained, add new aspects, which are lacking, and find a new direction where retention lacks. The study seeks to introduce IL not as a discipline, which is restricted to any field of study, but as a generic concept that should be taught across all fields. The findings will shed light on the actual state of IL among university students and what needs to be done to enhance it in order to meet the current needs of the job market as expressed from the employers' IL expectations and try to learn them.

The publication of the results of this study will contribute to the existing knowledge by showing the contextual and empirical performance of students of Feni University regarding IL skills and applications, their strengths, weaknesses and recommendations to improve areas of need. Furthermore, it may result in increased use of information and knowledge resources and the development of appropriate IL programs in universities. This may consequently result in improved services provision and optimum production by the university students for its development.

Methodology

Data for this research came from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from library users using questionnaires comprising both open-ended and close-ended questions designed to issues directly related to the objectives of the research. Purposive sampling was used to collect data from students' using questionnaire. In this regard, a total number of 100 questionnaires were submitted randomly to the Feni university library to collect students' data and some informal interviews or conversation have been taken under considerations to get additional information as well as in-depths views on the topic being researched. Secondary sources of data included previous works such as reports, books, journals, magazines, electronic sources and other related materials. Finally, collected data from the students were analyzed and graphical presentations were made using MS Excel for preparing the result.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The findings from the questionnaire survey conducted from the library users selected purposively from Feni University Library are presented here. Data has been collected through sending questionnaires to the university libraries and library staff distributed them to the students randomly. Students' data were analyzed according to Students demographic and academic information, students' perception about the information literacy programs, measurement of their information literacy and competency level, etc.

Table 1: Questionnaire distribution and response rate

Distribution of questionnaire	Questionnaire received	Response rate
100	86	86%

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to the Feni university libraries to obtain feedback from the library users and determine their information literacy and competency levels. The Table shows that, out of 100 distributed questionnaires, 86 were received from the library users. The response rate is about 86%.

Table 2: Respondents' academic year

Academic year of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1 st year	26	30%
2 nd year	12	14%
3 rd year	24	28%
4 th year	16	19%
M.A / MBA / M.Sc	8	9%

N = 86

Table – 2 indicates that out of 86 respondents of this survey, 26 (30%) students were studying in their 1st year, 12 (14%) were studying in the 2nd year, 24 (28%) were studying in the 3rd year, 16 (19%) were studying in the 4th year and 8 (9%) were studying at the Masters Level.

Table 3: Students' age group and sex

Age group & sex		Frequency	Percentage
Age Group	15 – 20	43	57%
	21 – 25	25	33%
	26 – 30	8	10%
Sex	Male	48	56%
	Female	38	44%

N = 86

Table 3 is designed to identify the frequency and percentage of students' age group and sex. The Table shows that the largest group of students 43 (57%) was aged between 15–20. The smallest group of 8 (10%) respondents was aged between 26-30 years. Among the responded, 56% was male and 44% was female students.

Table 4: Frequency of Library use

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	66	77%
Weekly	10	11%
Monthly	0	0%
Occasionally	10	12%

N = 86

Table 4 indicates that majority 66 (77%) of the respondents are using library Daily and followed by 10 (11%) of the respondents are using weekly, no students are using library monthly and 10 (12%) of the respondents are using occasionally.

Table 5: Purpose of Library Use

Purpose of Library Use	Frequency	Percentage
Borrowing reading materials	42	39.95%
Reading newspaper / magazine	53	51.37%
Reading books	59	57.54%
Preparing assignment / presentation	27	23.81%
Using computer and internet	46	44.13%
Using e- resources and reading journal articles	12	4.8%
Group study	15	9.26%
Gossiping and passing leisure times	13	6.38%

Table 5 reveals that, students have answered multiple options regarding the purpose of visiting library. The table shows that majority percent (57.54%) students among respondents visit library for reading books and followed by 51.37% for reading newspaper and magazines, 44.13% students visit library for using computer and internet, 39.95% students visit library for borrowing reading materials, 23.81% students visit for preparing assignment / presentation, 9.26% students visit for group study, 6.38% students visit for gossiping and passing leisure times and the least percent of the respondents (4.8%) visit library for using e-resources and reading journal articles.

Table 6: Students' Concept of Information Literacy

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Have vague concept	19	22%
Have heard, read but do not understand	29	34%
Do not know the actual meaning of IL	15	17%
Have clear concept	23	27%

N = 86

Students were asked to mention their concept about information literacy. A large number of students 29 (34%) replied that they have heard, read but do not understand, 23 (27%) students replied that they have clear concept about information literacy. 19 (22%) students replied that they have vague concept and 15 (17%) students replied that they do not know the actual meaning of Information Literacy. Following Figure shows the students' concept on information literacy:

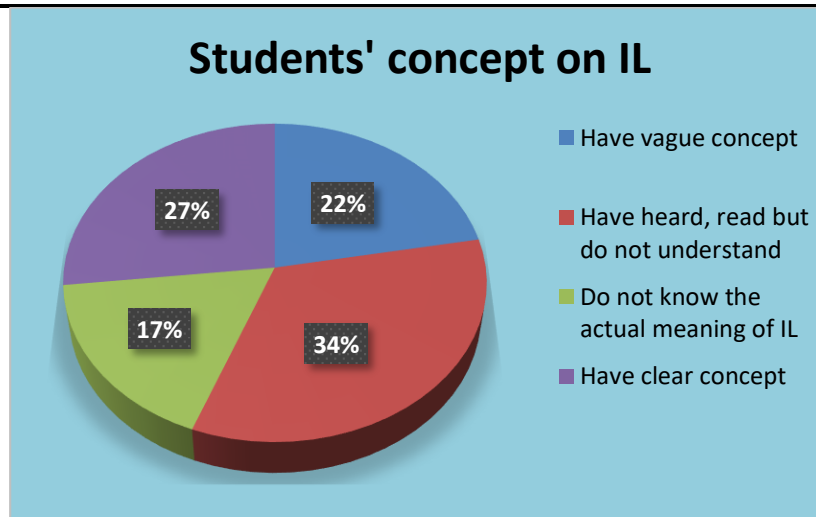


Figure: Students' Concept of Information Literacy

Table 7: Related areas of Information Literacy

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
User education	65	75.58%
Library Orientation Program	65	75.58%
Online Searching Techniques	65	75.58%
Information Retrieval Techniques	65	75.58%
OPAC Searching Techniques	45	52.32%
Bibliographic Instruction	55	63.95%
Media Literacy	62	72.09%
Web Literacy	61	70.93%
All of the above	66	76.74%
Do not know	21	24.41%

N = 86

The above table reveals that, students have expressed their opinion on related areas of information literacy. In this case they have chosen multiple options which are relevant to information literacy. The table indicates that, most of the students (76.74%) think information literacy is related with user education, library orientation program, online searching techniques, information retrieval techniques, OPAC searching techniques, bibliographic instruction, media literacy and web literacy. Among the respondent, 24.41% students don't have any idea about information literacy.

Table 8: Students preference on using research tools of finding research articles

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Journals	10	11.62%
World wide web	28	32.55%
Library catalogue	18	20.93%
Online database	19	22.09%
Do not know	11	12.79%

N=86

To verify the student's perception about the ability to independently identify, locate and retrieve information, they were asked which tool they would prefer. Table 8 shows that out of 86 respondents, most of the students, 28 (32.55%) prefer World Wide Web for finding research articles. Respectively, (19) 22.09% students prefer Online database, 18 (2.93%) prefer library catalogue, 11 (12.79%) students don't know about this issue and 10 (11.62%) students prefer journals for finding research articles. Following graphical presentation shows the scenario of Students' preference on using research tools of finding research articles.

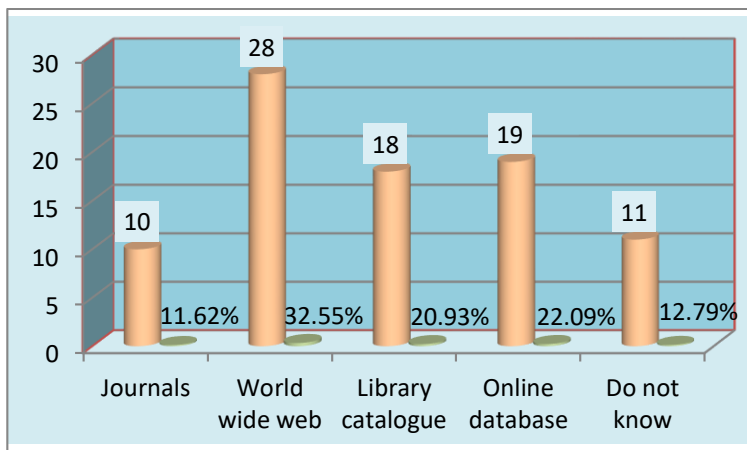


Figure: Students preference on using research tools of finding research articles

Table 9: Students’ preference on Google feature to find out research articles

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Google	63	73.25%
Google books	9	10.46%
Google scholar	11	12.79%
Do not know	3	3.48%

N=86

To verify the students’ information literacy and competency levels they were asked to mention the favorite Google feature they used to find research articles. Table-9 reveals that, most of the students 63 (73.25%) students preferred General Google, 9 (10.46%) preferred Google books, and only 3 (3.48%) students have idea regarding this issue. Following figure represent the graphical presentation of this issue.

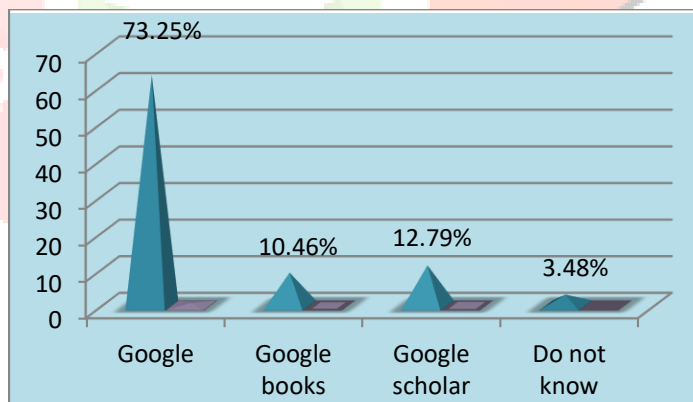


Figure: Students’ preference on Google feature to find out research articles

Table 10: Students’ perception on usage of sources of information to become familiar with an unknown subject.

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
A journal	6	6.97%
An encyclopedia	9	10.46%
A database	12	13.95%
A book	47	54.65%
All of these	10	11.62%
Do not know	2	2.32%

N = 86

In order to become familiar with an unknown subject, students were asked to mention the source with which they consult first. Table-10 shows that, most of the students (54%) use books to become familiar with an unknown subject while only 6.97%

students' use journal in this case. And 2.32% students don't know the source to become familiar with an unknown subject. Following figure illustrates the scenario graphically:

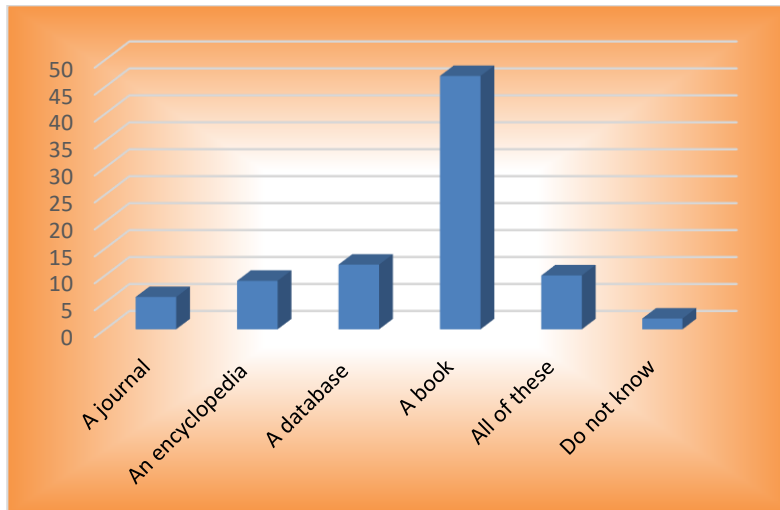


Figure: Students' perception on usage of sources of information to become familiar with an unknown subject

Table 11: Students' opinion about their information literacy skills

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	41	47.67%
Very Good	12	13.95%
Good	10	11.62%
Average	13	15.11%
Poor	10	11.62%

N = 86

Students were asked to evaluate themselves about their information literacy and competency level. Out of 86 respondents, only 41(47.67%) rated their information literacy and competency level as excellent. Among others, 12(13.95%) evaluated themselves as Very Good, 10 (11.62%) are good, 13 (15.11%) students rated themselves as average and 10(11.62%) students rated them as poor. Following figure illustrates the students' evaluation of their information literacy and competency levels:

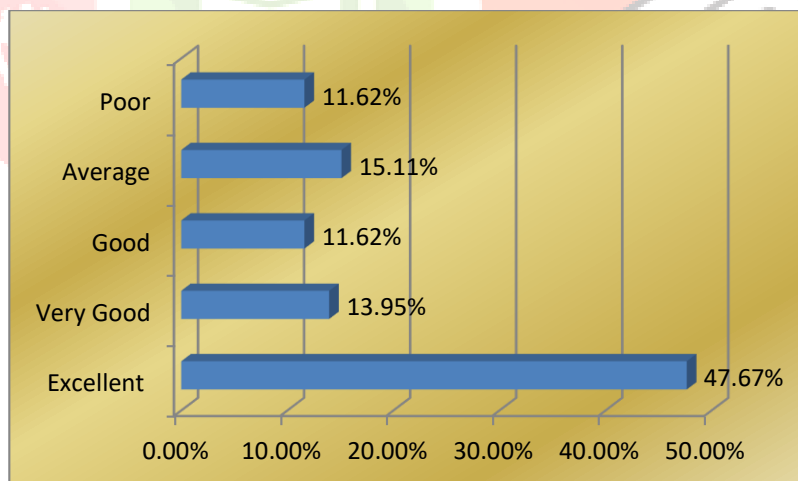


Figure: Students' information literacy skills

Table 12: Students' opinion on including IL Program into the undergraduate curriculum

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	76	88.37%
No	8	9.30%
Do not know	2	2.32%

N = 86

Students were asked to provide their opinion on the issue of including information literacy programs into the undergraduate curriculum. Table-12 shows that most of the students (95.35%) agree to include Information Literacy Program into the undergraduate curriculum and only 4.65% students replied that they were unaware about this matter.

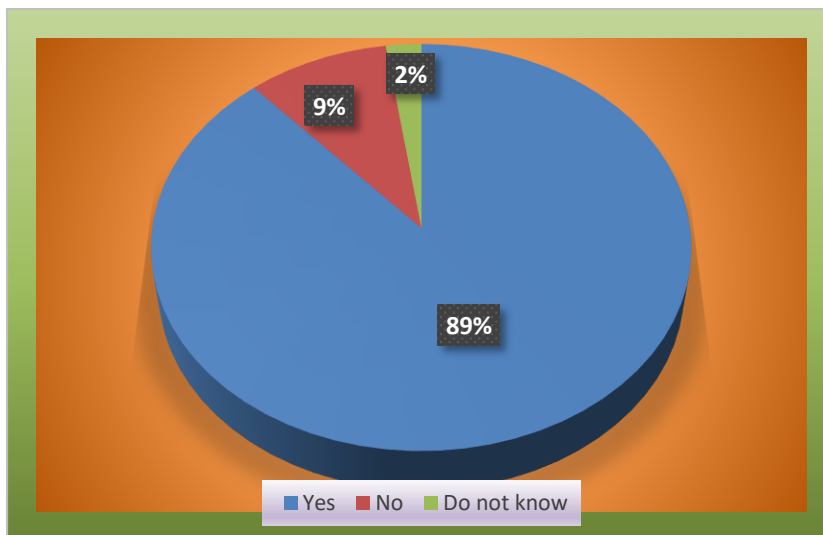


Figure: Students’ opinion on including IL Program into the undergraduate curriculum

Table 13: Students’ opinion on continuing of IL Program on a regular basis .

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	84	97.68%
No	0	0%
Do not know	2	2.32%

N = 86

Table-13 shows that out of 86 respondent, large number of students i.e. 84 (97.68%) responded with a positive attitude about continuing information literacy programs in university libraries on a regular basis. Figure shows the graphical presentation of the students’ opinion:

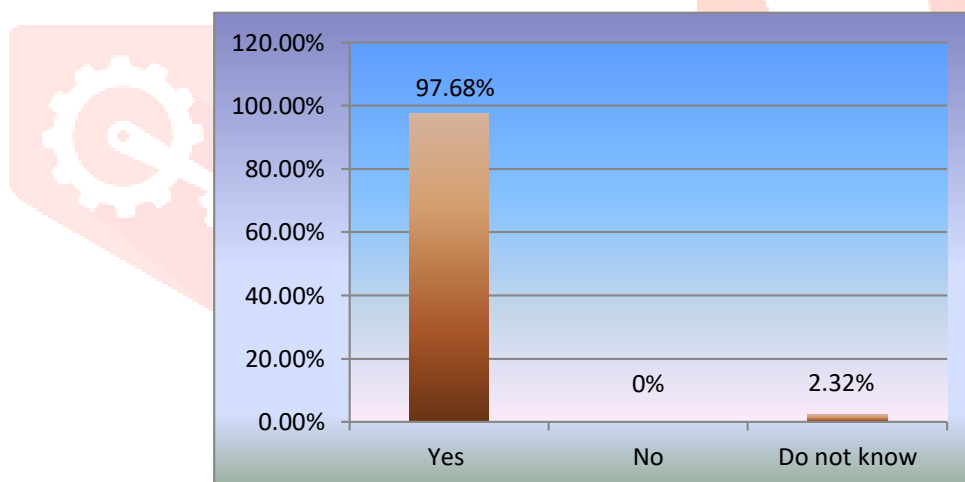


Figure: Students’ opinion on continuing of IL Program on a regular basis.

Table – 14: Students’ recommendation to improve IL Program in university libraries

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
The library should immediately start IL Program	86	100%
Need to start user education training program	86	100%
Need more skilled library personnel	86	100%
Need more IL guidelines for students	86	100%
No comments	0	0%

N=86

On the last question of the questionnaire, students were asked to recommend for improvement of information literacy education and training program in Feni university library choosing multiple indicators. Table 14 shows that 100% students recommended all of the mentioned indicators simultaneously.

Conclusions:

This study has explored the assessment of information literacy and competency level among students of Feni University. The findings present the original insights concerning the practice of IL program in university libraries, students IL skills and competency levels and so on. The goal of an educational institution is to create a community of learners; librarians, teachers and other administrative staffs can help foster the atmosphere that supports the goal. Information literacy is becoming an important part of collaborative efforts on campus. Library professionals should be ready to participate in the process of generating and distributing information and knowledge for quality of life long education for all. In short, library professionals must unite to withstand the resolutions that will occur in the information and communication fields. Technology alone cannot help bring about the required changes. Attitudes, practices, and policies need to change. There is a clear need for discussion of information literacy instruction outside of the library field. A more multi-disciplinary approach to information literacy research and instruction will create opportunities for more substantial, curriculum-integrated and long-lasting instructional experiences that will benefit students throughout and beyond their academic careers.

Bangladesh is in urgent need of the National Information Literacy Forum where issues related to Information literacy can be discussed at National level. University libraries may take steps towards starting a strong movement of information literacy. The network of organizations and professional associations engaged on the Information literacy promotion and implementation are to be established. There should be well-developed library and information systems and networks. Educational institutions should understand the importance of information literacy and lifelong learning skills and educate their students how to find, evaluate and effectively use information. Each educational setup should have well-trained information and library professionals because they are the one who will be collecting, organizing and disseminating the information for productive use and development.

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