

You are not Alone: Confusion with Software Applications in African University Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Building on Nardi & O'Day's (1999) classic book on information ecologies exploring the complexities of using multiple software applications in settings including libraries, we note that even though the technologies have changed over the decades, the importance of the work of librarians in assisting patrons has not changed much. Keeping up with popular, constantly evolving software packages like EndNote, Koha, NewGenlib, Baobab eLibrary, Openbiblio, Evergreen, Greenstone, and D-Space to support digital collections in various formats remains a constant challenge. Some librarians feel daunted by learning and explaining new software in a constantly changing technological ecosystem, while others embrace the challenge. As well as using software for their work, librarians have the responsibility to help their patrons learn, adapt, and apply new software to meet their information needs more effectively and efficiently. Like other client-facing professionals, librarians must also be mindful of the 'myths' (Ehrlich & Cash, 1994) that clients understand their problems and use online information if available. These software-related challenges have been documented in many countries (Asim et al., 2023, Adhikari, 2023), but our research identified a gap in the literature regarding the situation in Africa. The study implies the importance of education for librarians in adopting the right software and avoiding confusion. We conducted a review of LIS papers harvested from the LIS Ebscohost database about this topic in various countries of Africa between 2012 and 2022, identifying 75 papers as relevant according to our criteria. The poster presents the findings of the scoping review.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Information technologies; human-computer interaction, Libraries in the developing world, User interfaces, Academic libraries

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Learning and teaching novel software, Information technologies, and African Librarianship

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