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LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE STUDENTS AS BUDDING INFORMATION SCIENTISTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

A PAPER PRESENTED AT THE NALISS LECTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE, COLLEGE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY, KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY, MALETE ON 27TH MARCH, 2018.

BY

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ABSTRACTS

This paper discusses the growth of library and information science student as information scientist in the digital age and what library and information science as a course is all about. It also discusses the evolution of knowledge and learning in the past, present and the future. It further brief out the different roles or fields a library and information science students can be applied in the digital age. This article also stresses that library and information science students are also information doctors. Finally, this paper recommends the need for Library and Information Science Students to see themselves as valuable assets in the society and also the community at large especially in the digital age.

Keywords: Information, budding information, information scientist, information doctors, digital age



INTRODUCTION

Information in the digital age is the scientific way or act of informing or impacting knowledge. Information has been indispensable to every aspect of discipline in the world. Information as a way and act of ensuring all and sundry in nooks and crannies of life to be aware, informed, guided and directed in their various disciplines. Librarianship as a profession is like a search engine for professionals in other field of study in such a way that every librarians or Information scientists are tasked with the responsibilities of organization, retrieval and dissemination of recorded knowledge.

According to Dr. A.O Issa, he said “Library is no more a house or building; it is now an organization, institution or information center.” It is no longer that old perception.

According to Winston Churchill, he wrote that, “Information rules the world.” The world of knowledge is the world of information. Information has its ways of bringing informed individual from being illiterate or ignorant to be aware of what has happen, is happening and look forward to what might be happening later. “If you are not ready to be informed then you must be ready to be deformed.” Newton Lee also wrote, “Information is power.” It is a key to unlock the locked and also put to motion the stagnant.

From the previous discussions about information leads to how information is managed. For information to be acquired, processed, stored, retrieved and the disseminate to different individuals irrespective of discipline, field of study or area of concentration, it requires an information professionals or scientist who has undergone the training for the right period and also certified on it, the certified individual who provide information to the right users and at the right time are information professionals. It is only an information scientist or professionals that select, gather, organize, preserve and disseminates all kinds of information (printed or digital) to the right users. There is a way of interchangeably using this word with a librarian, so in a simple way, librarians are also information professionals and the Library and information science students are information professionals in training.

Library and information science students are on the track of being an information specialist and professional who will be in moments indispensable to others in different field or discipline simply because of versatilities. They have different knowledge in various fields and supplying useful information to all.

By this, it is noticed that information leads to knowledge which is useful in all fields and can only be best provided by the information professionals.

The change in librarianship is improving the field of librarianship because of the advent of digital technology in the 21st century which makes information dissemination easier. In the 21st century the library is at your fingertips through the power of technology, some think that technology has killed libraries. I disagreed. I think technology has add more value to library profession and make librarianship more refined, advanced and developing. As the amount of information grows increasingly or exponentially, the role of librarians as information manager or scientist becomes more important because only an information scientist can sort through jam-packed information to find particular or rightful information.

It became very obvious that librarians could no longer afford to deliver information haphazardly and through the use of computers and information technology equipment, computerization of library processes has been found faster, cheaper and more efficient way of managing information.

As technology has changed and allowed over new ways of creating, storing, organizing and providing information. Public expectation of the role of libraries increased. Libraries have also found that users or information seekers want information faster; they want information that clearly answers their questions.

It is no longer news that information and communication technologies (ICT) are having pervasive influence on all sectors of the global economy. ICTs are changing the landscape of librarianship, thereby making library and information science students a budding information scientist in the digital age. Revolutionizing traditional approach to directing libraries towards automation and globalization of information resources. Information professions are profession that are associated with and deal with information and management from various perspectives such as acquisition, processing, organization, preservation, dissemination and communication.

For students in the profession to take advantage of the present and emerging opportunities in the field, they need to acquire practical ICT skills so that our role as an information scientist in our society or digital age should never be over looked or overemphasized. Information needs by different individual and professional body varies, information need of various bodies and individual varies on the basis of their field of study and personal interest.



LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

It is regrettably lugubrious or saddened that some people in the society particularly in educational sector do not have knowledge about what library and information science as a discipline is all about. Some time back when I was first introduced to this course, even as a matriculated student of the department of library and information science who do not know anything about the course, then my colleagues in other discipline used to laugh at me that I should give them information about what is happening in the country being my area of specialization as an information scientist.

Actually library and information science as a course deals with the acquisition, organization, selection, auditing, cataloguing, classification, management and dissemination of information sought at any given time, in any format. But not by the way the laymen view things. I will like to shed more light on hidden things which people do not know about this particular profession (librarianship). Library and information science as a profession which is an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field of study that applies the practice perspectives and tool of education, management, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and other area to Libraries and information centers for the collection, organization, preservation and dissemination of print and electronic information resources.

The courses related with library and information science are as follows; organization of knowledge, development and management, preservation and conservation, reference and information services, information systems and structure, research methods, publishing, management, knowledge management, theory of knowledge, current awareness services, collection development,

information science, ICT records and archival management, communication studies and public relations, community development and information services etc.

It's high time you started seeing yourselves very relevant to the world. So far the world can't do without information then I can boldly say, "The world can't exist without the Information scientist." Our essence as Information professionals need to be unveiled to the world. How do you see yourself useful in the digital age?

By getting rid of that old perception you had about librarianship and learn new ICT skills to coherently manage and disseminate information effectively.

According to Professor C.C. Agudu, the library is "a collection of records of human culture in diverse formats and languages, preserved, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of individuals for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyments." Library is also described as a resource Centre of an institution, a depository of information to consult to expand upon and enrich the work of a reader or researcher.

A librarian is a mover of ideas, of information from one mind to another. So it's not enough to know library science. A librarian must understand the bigger picture called information science, of which library science is only a part (Issa, 2009).

According to A.O. Issa, he said, "Modern libraries are increasingly being redefined as places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources." In addition to providing materials, they also provide the services of specialists who are experts in matters related to findings and organizing information and interpreting information needs, called librarian.

Library and information science is the merging of library science and information science, we are not only librarian but also an information scientist. Librarianship of the 21st century is not all more about cataloguing and classification but the use of new technologies to library.

The discipline of information management is giving way to the post modern concept of knowledge management, the goal of which is to exploit information entities in an organization for the purpose of using that information to achieve greater value and to gain advantage over competitors. (Lal, 2008, p.413).

Lal. C., 2008 also stressed that management of information and services to people with information. Librarianship is defined by Macquarie Dictionary as a profession concerned with organizing, collection of books and related materials in libraries and making those resources or information available to readers and users.

Digital librarian deals with information in many formats including books, magazines, newspaper, photographs and other graphics materials, bibliographic databases and internet resources in general.

❖ LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Librarianship has been an age long profession in the world devoted towards providing right information to the right users in the right format and the right time. It is instructive to note here that librarianship did not begin in western countries but began in Asia and Africa; in tropical and sub-tropical countries. The library became an indispensable agency of a civilized society; there is no one plan that can satisfactorily describe the form, nature, purpose and services of the library throughout history. This is because, all these have always been determined by the needs of the people who have produced and used the written records in its multiple forms. These forms range from the clay tablets, papyrus, codex, vellum to original scientific reports, the magnetic tape and disc, and the various microforms of today (Issa, 2004).

In the ancient times, librarianship produced clay tablets, stones, animal skins deposited at palaces, courts, market centers and other related institutions. Also, it guided the then literates how to preserve, conserve and run the libraries in all field. The then libraries are not only repositories of human endeavor, they are instruments of civilization.

Presently, librarianship is a profession that teaches knowledge and skills that enables librarians, information officers, information manager etc to be self reliance, and guides the patrons to the world of learning.

Librarianship has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. Not only had the library as a place changing, but the nature of information itself is being transformed through the shift from linear text based information environment to

the networked hyperlinked non-linear environment. The goal of librarianship in the digital or 21st century is information equity, intellectual freedom, universal literacy and barrier free access to information (Panda, 2007).

Future, people have been writing about the future of libraries, but the real issue is the future of librarians, who should enter the library profession, what librarians should expect themselves and what administrators should expect from librarian. Some advocates replacing the title librarian with more fantastic term such as information specialist or scientist.

In the digital age or 21st century every one may need to go through many occupational changes. Many of these changes will take place at the desk, and the people will need information scientists help to make them to make the transition. As an information scientist if you want to adopt a certificate programme make sure it is dynamic and keeps pace with the time.

Librarians need to become information navigators who distill data into usable information. Online storage or repositories is increasing 40-50% a year and that's why as a budding information manager you need to get along with the latest technologies and think of the application of these technologies to library profession. As a budding information scientist we need to be responsive to the changes brought about the technological innovations and embrace the utilization of information technologies in their information handling processes.

❖ LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE STUDENTS AS INFORMATION DOCTORS.

Who are information doctors?

According to Wikipedia, “A doctor is a person who uses medicine to treat illness and injuries.” So an information doctors can also be seen as a person or an individual who uses information to treat the ill-information seekers. A doctor assesses diagnoses, administer, prescribe and treat a wide range of conditions. A doctor also selects, acquire and research.

Medical Doctors according to Wikipedia also treat patients by finding out what is wrong with them, known as diagnosis. They ask question about the patients

systems (Query). They will then examine the patient, after gathering enough information (Processing); a doctor can then make a diagnosis and then plan a treatment and prescribe drugs (Dissemination).

Information doctors also have the ability to locate (diagnosis), evaluate (Assess) and disseminate needed information (prescription).

Why are library and information science students regarded as information doctors?

They are referred to as information doctors because they treat users or information seekers coming into the library to learn or get a particular information for different purposes. Information doctors provide necessary information materials to ignorant or *ill-information seekers* that are ready to broaden his or her knowledge or ready to get informed about the subject he or she specializes in.

Only a doctor has a prescription to a particular sickness because they have better understanding about diseases in general or various types of sickness so therefore, an information doctor is also a professional trained to have better understanding about various information prescriptions or selections to an *ill-information seeker* who wants to get informed.

Information doctors are always ready to proffer correct solutions to user queries that may come to them at any point of time. As an information doctor you must always be ready to acquire, select, process and disseminate. Even a medical doctor comes to the library or visits an information scientist to get latest information about his or her profession, so it means as an information scientist we can never be sidelined.

Flourish or thrive of Information through library and Information science student.

In the world today, information is like a virus that spreads around and its importance can never be overlooked. Many institutions are finding new tools and new strategies to help libraries stay relevant in the digital landscape.

On most campuses, librarians are still the caretakers of academic information. It's simply that the format of that information is moving increasingly toward digital. To support modern research, the New Media Consortium (NMC) finds that libraries will need to offer students access to the digital versions of scholarly research.

It is the work of a librarian to ensure information reaches its immediate environment and get them informed. It allows them to know and get a particular information either historical or present age. Information can also be applied to all aspect of life, be it socially, culturally, educationally etc information has also helped us to develop our community and nation at large because when everyone is informed, it's a symbol of growth and development.

Libraries also need to increase students' ability to access digital resources of which Kwara State University (KWASU) sets out to create a library that would better found its student with the services they actually need. For example, a 24 hrs Computer Lab or e-library.

❖ LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The library professionals had never been exposed so much in the past to the changing information scenario as they are being exposed now. In this digital age of information explosion the technology is progressively replacing the old methods of information collection, storage and retrieval. Today the walls of a library have very little meaning except for security purposes because the library is getting shaped on the internet and different networks around the world. This scene is going to grow quite fast in the 21st century and the librarians have to face the challenge of this changing scene. (Lal, 2008, p.420).

The forms of information to be curated in the 21st century are changing and that has created both challenges and opportunities for librarians as they cope with the new world. As a library and information science students there are numerous field that you can fit into. According to Katherine Martins, she said “Books are moving out of libraries to make room for new technological approach to researches.”

The curation of digital information as also made the world smaller, more responsive and to a large extent more affordable for users. Library and information science offers many pathways to explore in the digital age based on your passions, what you want to learn and how you want to make an impact. No matter your area of interest, you will be well prepared for the journey.

Some pathways you may choose to explore in the digital age as information professionals or scientists include:

- Database Administration or development
- Interface Designer
- Research Consultant
- ICT records and Archiving or Records Management
- Web Development
- Facilitators
- Digital Asset Librarian
- Innovation management
- Information Manager
- Information Architecture
- Museum Curator
- Customer Care Service
- Knowledge Organization etc

There is still many more area of specialization or field which a library and information scientist can be fit into in the digital age but only few are mentioned.

❖ CONCLUSION

From the previous work of research done, it is true that library and information science students are growing or budding information scientist in the digital age and even more to that I can boldly agree to the fact that we are all information doctors. We need to acquire the necessary skills and be responsive to changes as they occur in the globalized world. Traditional skills must be improved upon if information professionals are to play vital roles in the new information environment. LIS professionals should bear in mind that they are not just information empire builders, but information estate managers.

❖ RECOMMENDATION

Library and information science students are information scientists in training who are working towards being a professional in the field of information in the nearest future. Kwara State University should help in providing new age technologies for the Library and Information Science Students to help us fit into any professional as an information scientist in the digital age. They should also provide facilities to influence the way the department teach the next generation of Library and Information Scientist with the aim of better training them for the new demands of modern libraries to help future or budding information scientists or professionals navigate the complex tasks of supporting researchers. Their importance in the society are less appreciable by people and I hereby employ Library and information science students to see themselves as valuable assets in the society and also the community at large should see them as an indispensable tool for information explosion.

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