Winter 2-5-2021

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By

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INTRODUCTION

Librarianship is a service-oriented profession which focuses on managing relevant information resources to meet diverse needs of users. The goals of librarianship, particularly its role in transmission of knowledge cannot be achieved without users occupying a huge portion in the process of information services; this preoccupation has implications for how librarianship is and will be practiced. Besides possessing knowledge and expertise in information content and users' information seeking behavior, librarians now need to be comfortable in online environment and be familiar with ethical issues involved. Librarianship is central to academic activities in higher institutions globally because academic libraries are information and knowledge warehouse where resources of diverse formats are managed to meet users' needs (Adebayo, Akole and Salau, 2016).

Library and Information Science as a Profession: In modern usage, professions tend to have certain qualities in common. A profession is always held by a person, and it is generally that person's way of generating income. Dalton E. McFarland in "Management Functions and Practices" mentions some characteristics of a profession. Along with the characteristics, necessary arguments are given below to justify whether librarianship is a profession or not.

a) Entrance is Competitive: All professions maintain rigid rules and high standard of qualification for the new entrants into the profession. As entrance into professions is highly competitive an entrant typically has to have above-average mental skills.

b) Body of Specialized Knowledge and Technical Skill: A specialized knowledge of the concerned field is needed by the professional. Those persons who are engaged in a library should have the required academic background although; some of them may not possess a LIS degree. To practise librarianship also requires extensive knowledge and technical skill such as an extensive knowledge of classification or cataloguing without which one may find it difficult to run a library.

c) Formal Training and Experience: Professions also require rigorous training and schooling beyond a basic college degree for acquiring the needed skill and methods to put the knowledge into work. Nowadays there is a large body of growing literature on library and information science for training and educating the professionals to acquire specialized knowledge and skill in the field of library science.

d) An Ethical Code or Standard of Conduct: A set of principles, a social code or ethics is needed for the professional. Many organizations have codified their conduct, often designated "code of ethics", and what they require for entry into their organization and how to remain in good standing. Some of these codes are quite detailed and make strong emphasis on their particular area or expertise. In different parts of the world different professional bodies of Library and Information Science codified such rules.

e) A Commitment to Public Service: A professional needs to work with the prime purpose of rendering a public service rather than for monetary gain. It has also been suggested that some professionals feel an obligation to society, beyond their client relationship. The obligation to educate the client is often seen as a key part of the definition. Librarianship is a service oriented job and the user of a library is regarded a king.

f) Guarantees of the Service Rendered: The concepts of professionalism may be inferred from guarantees. But these are inferences only. The idea behind a guarantee is that the person offering the guarantee is accountable to the extent of damages that will be compensated. One thing these

sources hold in common, implicit or explicit, is the idea of accountability. Those who are members of these organizations or professions are held accountable for what they do.

g) Formal Organization: An organization generally binds all the members of a group, calling or vocation together for concerted opinion, to achieve high standard in performance, and to act as a force to achieve common goal.

The formal organization of librarianship started with the establishment of the American Library Association in 1876. At modern times library association are there at different levels i.e. international, regional, national, state and local. Many associations covering specialized interest have also come into being.

h) Licensing of Practitioners: Membership in the profession is usually restricted and regulated by a professional association. For example, lawyers regulate themselves through a bar association and restrict membership through licensing and accreditation of law schools. Hence, professions also typically have a great deal of autonomy, setting rules and enforcing discipline themselves. Professions are also generally exclusive, which means that laymen are legally prohibited from practicing the profession. Generally, professional library jobs require an academic LIS degree as certification. In the United States, the certification usually comes from a Master's degree granted by an ALA-accredited institution. Etymologically, Librarianship is as old as the book itself. However, librarianship started assuming some of the characteristics of a profession from 1876 onwards. This was the year when American Library Association was established, the American Library Journals was launched, and the first edition of the DDC and the C. A. Cutter's Rules for making a dictionary catalogue were published.

According to Yaya and Adeeko (2015) Librarianship is a professional body that is saddled with the responsibilities of selecting, acquiring, processing and effective dissemination of relevant information resources to the information seekers in order to satisfy their information needs. The profession is the manager and custodian of organized knowledge stored in a conducive environment or building known as library. This profession is one of the most important professions in the human race; because everybody in the human society needs information at every stage of life in order to survive.

In Nigeria today, in the words of Ezeani, Eke and Ugwu (2015) librarianship has grown to be a widely recognized profession. As noted by Saleh (2011), the stage for the development of library profession in Nigeria was set up with the arrival of John Harris as the librarian of the University College Ibadan, in 1948. "He was not only instrumental to the development of the University College Library, but also organized the Native Authority Libraries, the first organized Library Training course in 1950."

Nigerian Library Association (NLA) started off as a body to bring library science practitioners and professionals together to share a common goal. The objectives of the association are:

• To unite persons interested in Libraries, Librarianship and Information services;

• To safeguard and promote the professional interests of librarians;

• To promote the establishment and development of libraries and information centres;

• To watch legislation affecting libraries and assist in the promotion of such legislation as may be considered necessary for the establishment, regulation and management of libraries within Nigeria;

• To promote and encourage bibliographical study, research and library cooperation and;

• To do all lawful things as are incidental and conducive to the attainment of the above objectives

However, to regulate the activities and practice of Librarianship in Nigeria, a body was set up under the act; the body is Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria. They are charged with the responsibility of certifying the Librarians in Nigeria.

VALUES OF LIBRARIANSHIP PROFESSION

According to Lester (2010), professional is someone who claims to possess knowledge of something and has a commitment to a particular code or set of values, both of which are fairly well-accepted characteristics of professions. In a related development, Wikibooks (2013) observe that values are essential to the success and future of librarianship: they highlight what is "important and worthy in the long run," and help to define librarianship profession. In a literature review on professional values in Library and Information Science (LIS), Finks (1989) argues that these values fall into four categories:

• Professional values are inherent in librarianship and include recognizing the importance of service and stewardship; maintaining philosophical values that reflect wisdom, truth, and neutrality; preserving democratic values; and being passionate about reading and books.

• General values are "commonly shared by normal, healthy people, whatever their field." Librarians' work, social, and satisfaction values express a commitment to lifelong learning, the importance of tolerance and cooperation, and the need to feel accepted.

• Personal values specifically belong to librarians and include humanistic, idealistic, conservative, and aesthetic values. He must be passionate towards people and reading.

• Rival values threaten the mission of libraries with bureaucratic, anti-intellectual, and nihilistic (useless and senseless) ideas (Wikibooks, 2013).

PROFESSIONAL FUNCTIONS OF LIBRARIANS

Every profession is set up to carry out certain tasks in order to benefit human race. Thus, librarianship profession is a laudable profession that benefits the human race in so many important areas; hence, it performs the following tasks so as to contribute positively to the growth and development of the community where it is sited; the librarians' functions discussed in this paper are adapted from www.liasa.org.za/sites/de...librarianship/2003:

• Selection and acquisition of information sources relevant to the needs of the user community In any human society, information is very crucial; it facilitates development in every facet of human endeavors. Information is very broad and complex; hence, relevant information has to be selected and acquired in order to effectively minister to the information needs of various information seekers in the society. Therefore, librarians has to take cognizance of the information needs of his users before selecting and acquiring relevant information resources to satisfy their informational needs.

• Organization and management of the information sources and facilities so that the collections are accessible to the users for information to be easily accessible and useful to any information seeker in the human society, such information has to be systematically organized and professionally managed by the librarians. Information has to be classified using a standard scheme in accordance to the subjects it treats. Thus, the following schemes could be used to

classify information resources in different libraries: Library of Congress Classification scheme (commonly used in the Academic libraries); Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (commonly used in Public and School libraries); Colon Classification scheme; Bliss Classification scheme; Universal Decimal Classification scheme (all are commonly used in Special and Private libraries). With these schemes, librarians could effectively organized library resources so as to enhance their easy accessibility.

• Dissemination of information to the users Librarians can effectively disseminate information to their users through: selective dissemination of information (SDI), open access publications; physically displaying information materials on the library shelves for outright consultation; charging and discharging of information resources for further consultation at the users' convenient time and locations.

• Facilitating access to information in print and electronic formats Librarians do facilitate easy access to the educational resources kept in the library by providing bibliographic details of each library material on 3x5" cards and arranged them alphabetically on the public catalogue; thus, library arranges the bibliographic description of its resources in author/title, subject and classified catalogues respectively so as to give easy access to its holdings and thereby "saves the time of readers" (Ranganathan, 1963). Also, library provides Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC); an electronic format for the accessibility of the library collections. Besides, it provides shelf guides for those books arranged on each library shelf so as to give physical/easy access to them.

• Creating and managing digital collections in institutional repositories An Institutional Repository (IR) is an online archive for collecting, preserving, and disseminating digital copies of the intellectual output of an institution, particularly a research institution (Wikipedia, 2014). An institutional repository can be viewed as a "...a set of services that a university offers to members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members (Lynch, n.d). For a university, this includes materials such as monographs, academic journal articles, both before (preprints) and after (post prints) undergoing peer review, as well as electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs). Also, it consists of digital assets generated by academics, such as administrative documents, course notes, learning objects, or conference proceedings. Deposit of material in an institutional repository is

sometimes mandated by that institution (Wikipedia, 2014). Some of the main objectives for having an institutional repository are to provide open access to institutional research output by self-archiving it, to create global visibility for an institution's scholarly research, and to store and preserve other institutional digital assets, including unpublished or otherwise easily lost ("grey") literature such as theses or technical reports (Wikipedia, 2014).

• Electronic resources management: these include managing licensing agreements and facilitating access to electronic databases journals and books. In most Academic libraries, examples of electronic resources include: Ebscohost, Mylibrary, Jstor, Science direct, Agora and others. All these provide immediate and current educational materials to the library users. With these online resources, information seekers can access information in any area of their needs and disciplines; they can equally access collections that are stocked by the library at their convenience without necessarily visiting the library for their various information needs.

CHALLENGES OF LIBRARIANSHIP PROFESSION

Although the librarianship profession is a worthy profession that is involved in performing the professional functions aforementioned and discussed in this paper. However, its activities are being hampered by some problems; these are being discussed as follows:

• **Lack of adequate publicity**: Adequate publicity is an essential ingredient that enhances growth and development of any organization. It attracts favour and goodwill from high calibres of people in the society to any association that know how to adequately publicize its activities to the world. Unfortunately, the activities of library association lack adequate publicity compare to their counterparts like the Nigerian Medical Association and Nigeria Bar Association whose activities are given adequate publicity whenever they are to hold their annual convention, this always attracts even the president of Nigeria to attend or he could send a delegate of high government officials to represent him in case if he could not personally grace their occasions. The implication that this inadequacy might have on the library association are enormous: first, the association's programmes and projects will not be easily known to the general public; people that could be of help to the association will not be adequately reached for them to render much needed assistance; besides, the attention of the association's membership will not be adequately

drawn to her activities, this might prevent her members from actively supporting the association programmes and activities for the year.

• **Lack of due recognition**: Generally, people have low interest for reading; it is a popular adage that "if you want to hide anything from a natural man put in a textbook but if you want such information to be known, put it on the screen". This implies that people transfer such negative notion towards anything that pertains to library and its association. Lack of due recognition of librarianship association has brought a lot of setbacks to the association; many organizations and wealthy individuals often closed their doors of assistance towards its projects and programs. Unlike their counterparts like Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) or Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) where people and organizations often need their services; this makes people to have high regards to their associations and their projects are heavily supported by some wealthy individuals and organizations in the society. The implication of this problem on the librarianship profession is that people in authorities of any organization or even government officials will not give immediate approval to library budgets and projects as they do to other sectors in the same organization or government establishment.

• **Fund inadequacy**: Money is the determinant factor that accelerates the growth and development of any association. The librarianship association is facing the challenge of short supply of fund; many visions and laudable projects of the executive members of the association remain unfulfilled dream due to scarcity of funds to execute them. The Nigerian Governments are not given financial support to the association. Sadly enough, the membership of the association are not helping matters; most members are not financially committed to the association as they are not faithful in paying their annual dues to the association. In such case, how can the association's project be implemented? The implication of this problem is that laudable programmes and projects of the association for the year will not be adequately implemented. Therefore, there should be total commitment of members towards the association and its dream.

• **Political factors** as hinted above, the Nigeria Library Association is not getting much needed recognition and support from the government officials. Library is a service delivery institution; government officials see library as not for profit organization in which they must not waste much resources sponsoring its projects and association. This negative posture has greatly affected the

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growth of the association. Most of these officials built up stiff opposition against the association and they prevented it from having much sought government attention. The implication of this on the library is that it would prevent library from acquiring and adequately providing all the needed information resources for the survival of such organization as "library is a growing organism" (Ranganathan, 1963).

• **Lack of government interest in implementing the report of association**: Every association wants to contribute to the growth and development of its country; therefore, they usually release some developmental report that could help in formulating policies that would assist in building and developing the country economy. Thus, it is the desire of every association for government to implement their report. Unfortunately, most of these association reports especially that of the Nigeria Library Association are not implemented nor are they used to formulate information policies that would help in developing the economy sector. This has greatly affected the morale of these associations especially the Nigeria Library Association from making any useful developmental suggestion in their report. The implication of this had led to inadequate formulation and implementation of information policies that would enhance growth and development of public libraries that is generally regarded as 'people's university' in the country; most of these libraries are full of obsolete and old collections, dilapidated infrastructures and frustrated library personnel due to non-payment of their salaries and wages for several months.

• **Lack of rich curriculum in most library schools**: there are many library school graduates who are not competent enough to face the challenges that abound in the labour market. In librarianship; one of the major reasons for these lapses is principally as a result low level or poor curriculum that was used to train this group of young librarians, no wonder they perform woefully in their places of work. In most library schools in Nigeria, they are still using ancient curriculum to train their students without following the modern trend in librarianship; whereas we are in the modern trend in the human race otherwise known as 'information age' where computer applications has taken the place of traditional method of librarianship. In most library schools, they don't even have computer laboratory where student librarians will be exposed to electronic formats of processing and disseminating information nor do they engage the services of System librarians/lecturers to train these young potential librarians on the application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and its accessories. How can such young

librarian perform in an electronic library set up where they usually transmit the library operations through computer system and its accessories? The implication of this on most of these young librarians and librarianship as a whole is that they are not skillful enough to be gainfully employed in most academic libraries; also, few of them that are lucky to be employed are not productive as they performed below average this made them to be disengaged from such hard earned employment.

• **Competitors challenges***:* According to Yaya, Achonna and Osisanwo (2014), academic libraries are having some organizations that are competing with their services and if urgent steps are not taken these organizations may send librarians out of their laudable profession, these include: Internet and web sites providers; Telecommunication (telephone) operators; E-journals and ebooks providers; Special and private information centers; Archives and documentation centers. Ironically, the above mentioned competitors are equipped with sophisticated technology, current and relevant information resources with adequate funding that enhance their ability to provide much needed services to the information seekers; these make information users to develop little or no interest in visiting the library for any help, except during examination period when large population of readers (students) will visit the library. The implication of this problem on the library services is that most information seekers will shift their attention from seeking their needed information from the library as they could get such needed information elsewhere, although most academic libraries have acquired some online resources like: Ebscohost, Science direct, JSTOR, Myilibrary, Bookboon.com, AGORA and other educational sources; these are purposely made to enhance their operations; yet libraries are recording low patronage and this could affect its annual budget as library management are not in possession of readers' relative high figure to support her monetary request during budget defense, this would eventually affect their active competition with other information providers. Therefore, the library management should act fast and provide all the modern facilities and technologies that are needed to enable library to effectively compete with other organizations that are offering similar services to the public.

THE GAP: LIBRARY SCHOOL VS FIELD OF PRACTICE (LIBRARY)

One of the greatest challenges across most practical-based disciplines and professions is the distance of the gap between the theory of classroom and the practical of the field of practice. The gap between the research theories of classroom and practice is a growing point of interest and worries which has triggered a lot of debates by some scholars.

The field of Librarianship is not far from what is being discussed above especially in Nigeria. The theories of Library schools are no more used in the field of practice thereby making students and young graduates to leave school with 'junky knowledge' that makes the graduate irrelevant and unemployable as employers are not ready to start another theory training for any employee.

This gap that has not been bridged between theory and practice is negatively affecting the professional bodies because for one to be a professional, he must be vast in theory and practice. Which is the synchronization of what is being taught in the classroom and the practice in the field, but these days, the practice in the library is quite different from the theories in the classroom.

The big question now is, "Are there two segments of professionals in a profession?" There is great need for the Library professional bodies to evaluate the happening and take necessary actions to bridge this gap.

CAUSES OF THE GAP

A lot of factors have been identified to be the responsible for this non-synchronization of classroom theories and field practical.

To commence with, one of the causes of the gap has to do with the advent of Information and Communication Technology in the field of learning. In this technology era, the expectation of librarians has increased and it is necessary that they live up to the changes that occur at every time. With this advent of technology, most libraries have automated their activities and services and hence the need for those automation to be taught and practicalised in the library schools. Also new services have emerged with same advent of technology which are expected of information managers in this technology era. Examples are Digitization, Software management

and design, programming, other library automated activities like copy cataloguing, computer indexing and abstracting, database management.

Secondly, the content of the first point is also linked and connects this second point which is on Curriculum. Also another great cause of this gap is the lacuna in the curriculum. The curriculum of the library schools needs to be reviewed every five years, so that students and would be taught following the trends of time. A sample study carried out on LIS Students through the National body, shows that the curriculum of all library schools in Nigeria needs to be reviewed to incorporate IT and its application in the field of Librarianship. The curriculum should be of international standard and should tailor to where the world is going, like the United Nations SDGs and how libraries and librarians would help in actualizations of some of the goals.

Furthermore, the credibility of the lecturers should be another cause of the gap. The lecturers taken any course especially the IT related course should have intellectual know-how, to effectively take the course. There is need therefore, for the lecturers to continue go for workshops, conferences and seminar in order to update their knowledge, learn new skills and move with the trend of time.

COSTS OF THE GAPS

This identified gap has caused a lot in the profession, and the cost has done a lot of harm on the image of the profession and on the young graduates.

Some of the costs include:

- Non-employability of LIS Graduates
- Less productivity in the library
- Backwardness of the professional body
- Disparity between the educators and practitioners
- Poor educational productivity

BRIDGING THE GAPS

The summary of all the gaps actually focused on the knowledge based of the graduates of LIS, which by extension; have to do with curriculum and education. The solution to this gap is to bridge the gap through update of curriculum. For the curriculum to be reviewed, there should be a study on the employers of labour, and those practicing in the field to get feedback on the expectations of the graduates and the skills needed in the field of practice especially IT skills, these findings would be of help in the review of curriculum.

An example of the place where such study was done was at the Africa Regional Centre for Information Science, University of Ibadan. In 2016, a study was conducted to find out the expectations of employers of her graduates and current trends in the industry. The aim of the study was to review the curriculum and from the findings, add some courses that will inculcate the novel skills and some practical that will enable her graduates to be employable and relevant in the Information industry.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO REMAIN RELEVANT?

- In the digital age, when information is increasingly becoming available online, there is a propensity to say that libraries and librarians are redundant. This is not the case. Information available online is often of dubious origin and there is still a wealth of information behind paywalls that can only be accessed by those who have paid access. We have helped many library users who have only been using search engines for their research and come to the library perplexed because they cannot find the information they want. If anything, the internet has added to the range of services libraries provide and in turn this has also increased the variety of roles available to librarians.
- As well as being good communicators with people and active adopters and exploiters of technological developments, librarians need to have detailed specialist subject knowledge to pass on to library users. Librarians provide training to show people how to search for information and evaluate what they find. These information skills sessions are now expanding to include digital literacies such as how to stay safe online, the use of social media sites and online collaboration tools.

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