

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

---

2021

## Young People's Perceptions towards Librarians: An Exploratory Study of Students of Five Senior High Schools in Ghana

Samuel Abban

*Presbyterian University College, Ghana, saaammybeee@yahoo.com*

Reuben Saah

*Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, saahreuben@gmail.com*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

Abban, Samuel and Saah, Reuben, "Young People's Perceptions towards Librarians: An Exploratory Study of Students of Five Senior High Schools in Ghana" (2021). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 5124.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/5124>

## **Young People's Perceptions towards Librarians: An Exploratory Study of Students of Five Senior High Schools in Ghana.**

### **Abstract**

This study sought to discover young people's impressions of librarians and their work. Three Hundred and Fifty Three Senior High School (SHS) students were selected using proportionate stratified sampling technique for the study. Using the survey descriptive method, structured questionnaires were randomly administered. Three Hundred and Twenty Six, representing 92% of the questionnaires were retrieved and found usable. The study includes a comparison of a librarian with nine other professional groups based on five criteria considered to be essential determining factors when choosing a profession. The study revealed that the students' had low level of awareness of librarians, lacked understanding of the role librarians played in their environment and had negative perceptions toward librarians. The students did not also have appreciable understanding of what the work of librarians entailed, resulting in a lack of interest in becoming librarians.

**Key words:** Young people, Perception, Librarian, Image, Students, Librarianship

### **Introduction**

Librarians are dedicated professionals who serve all sort of people by helping them access timely and accurate information, thereby contributing immensely to the development of society (Hashim & Mokhtar, 2012). Librarians deal with human knowledge by organizing and making this knowledge accessible. Their work is noble, complex, rich, stimulating, rewarding and a fantastic career choice. It is obvious that for the work of a librarian to be attractive to young people it must be appealing and rewarding. This requires that librarians demonstrate certain qualities to make their status justified in the present dispensation. Some of these qualities include management and leadership skills, competency, research and contribution towards the profession and information communication and technology (ICT) skills.

In spite of the above, several studies have shown that most young people do not understand and appreciate the work of librarians. This has led to their having negative rather than positive perceptions towards librarians. Young people perceive the work of librarians as boring, less challenging, tedious, unpopular and had low earning capacity (Genoni & Greeve 1997). Unfortunately, stereotypical images have also been associated and used to describe the librarian.

Some of which include; feminine and powerless (Harris & Wilkinson, 2001), poor professional image linked to personalities like introverted, lack of self-confidence, poor interpersonal skills (Atkinson, 1994), conservative, introspective, orderly and meticulous (Spaulding, 1989), myopic and repressed, brandishing behind a date-stamp, surrounded by a display of notices which forbid every human action (Sare, Bales & Neville, 2012) and educated clerks, responsible for dissemination and transmission of books (Fagan, 2002). All these have consolidated the unwarranted perception young people have towards librarians.

While librarianship as a profession is still having difficulty to be known due to the perceptions of the general public, other careers like Medicine, Law and Accounting enjoy wide popularity. A study conducted in Nigeria by Egunjobi, Taofiq and Olufelai (2013) revealed that students pursuing Library and Information Science (LIS) may not have a natural interest in the profession since they did not perceive it as a “Professional discipline”. Rather most undergraduate’s found themselves in the profession by accident. They were of the view that “most undergraduates would rather choose professional disciplines like Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, Accounting, Engineering etc. and then have a rethink of change of course when they do not meet up to the required demands for admission” (p. 297). This is because they perceived those professions were respected by society, offered much help to people and earned more money. Again, they heard people always spoke about them at home, school, community and the media as prestigious. Similar studies conducted by Alemna (1991) and Adanu & Amekuedee (2010) brought to the fore that the scene is not different in a developing country like Ghana. Many librarians did not decide to become librarians from the onset of their career. Those who chose the profession did so as a result of influence, experience or as the only alternative left. They again stated that others’ choice of becoming librarians were mainly as a result of external factors, with the opportunity of using it as a stepping stone to further their education. Furthermore, in situations where a few had decided to take up the profession, they did that with remorse.

Despite the attitude of youths toward librarianship, the opportunity to encourage young people with fresh ideas, creativity, drive, passion and enthusiasm to develop positive impressions towards librarians is still possible. For example, studies of Timiyu, Akussah and Tackie (1999) shows that the perception and motivation of the Diploma students entering the Library and Archives programmes at the University of Ghana changed positively after one year into their

course of study. This happened because they realized the opportunities that could be available to them at the end of their studies.

### **Study Setting/ Research Environment**

The research was conducted in five (5) selected SHS at the Akropong- Akuapem Municipality, specifically the form three students. Akropong- Akuapem is located at the Eastern Region of Ghana which is about 58 kilometers from Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Akropong- Akuapem falls under the Akupem North Municipality “in the South-Eastern part of the Eastern Region. It shares boundaries to the Northeast with Yilo Krobo, North with New Jauben Municipal, Southeast with Dangbe West, Southwest with Akwapem South District, and in the West with Suhum-Krabo-Coaltar District.” (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014, p.1). The study was focused on SHS in the Akropong- Akuapem Municipality which has about ten (10) Senior High Schools. The five schools selected for this study are; Presbyterian Senior High Technical School, Larteh- Akuapem (PSHTS), Okwapemman Senior High School, Akropong- Akuapem (OSHS), H’Mount Sinai Senior High School, Akropong- Akuapem (MSSHS), Mamfe Methodist Girls Senior High School, Mamfe- Akropong (MGSHS) and Benkum Senior High School, Larteh- Akuapem (BSHS).

### **Statement of the problem**

Regardless of the rapid changes in the work undertaken by librarians and information professionals, it appears that the perception of young people about the work they do and the reward gained has been negative. “In the view of many youth, librarians maybe lack the glamour, respect and prestige that other disciplines seem to enjoy, or perhaps people with more experience in the profession have had more opportunities to develop a deeper appreciation of the nature of library work” (Newbutt & Sen, 2009, p.47). This suggest that, many people already in the profession as well as those taking courses in librarianship would have preferred to do other programmes (Adanu & Amekuedee, 2010). Another concern is that it looks as if there isn’t much understanding and appreciation amongst the general public about who librarians are; their role, duties, responsibilities, qualification and status. It appears most people do not realize that librarians are the unacknowledged heroes behind the success stories of Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, and Accountants etc. (Olawanle & Abayomi, 2010). Furthermore, the perception young people have of who librarians are, may also come from the common stereotyping of librarians as old women, stamping, packing and shelving books has affected the image of the profession. In

spite of the effort to attract young people to the profession, however, there has been little research conducted into exactly how young people perceive librarians. This study therefore is intended to investigate the seemingly negative perception towards librarians, the low level of research conducted in this area, and the effort to help eliminate the erroneous impression young people have towards the work of librarians.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Specifically the study aimed at:

1. Identifying whether the SHS students' are aware and appreciate the work librarians' do
2. Determining the perception that the SHS Students' have towards librarians'
3. Finding out whether or not the SHS Students' are interested in becoming librarians'

### **Literature Review**

#### **The Librarian**

The Harrod's Librarians' Glossary and Reference Book describes a librarian as "one who has care of a library and its contents; the work includes selection of stock, its arrangement and exploitation in the widest sense, and the provision of a range of services in the best interests of all groups of users" (Prytherch, 2005, p.415). Aina (2004) observed that the growth of libraries brought about the librarianship profession. He indicated that a librarian is concerned with the collection, storage, processing and dissemination of information in a library. Thus librarians assert themselves and reinforce their abilities in their quest to serve a very complex clientele, providing access to information to satisfy their needs. Nwalo (2000) cited in Busayo (2017) by enumerating the characteristics of a profession, concluded that librarianship is no doubt a profession because it meets all the requirements of a profession, he outlined those characteristics as follows:

1. A profession is directed by concern for clients who comes for assistance
2. A profession is guided by certain set of skills which needs to be taught
3. A profession is based on a substantial body of knowledge which one has to go through a period of training or education.
4. A profession has requirements of professional qualifications for entry into the professional group, based on character, and proven competence.
5. A profession has an official publication for advancement of knowledge of the profession

6. A profession must be beneficial to the general public and those practicing ought to be able to make a living out of it.

For a fact, librarians play many roles in their various work places to serve their clients. The traditional library concept is being changed from a place where paper books or paper records are accessed to a place where advanced electronic resources are housed. Therefore, librarians, usually called information professionals, combine traditional duties and those involving the use of technology. The work of a librarian is usually focused on technical services, user services and administrative services. Technical services carried out by librarians include acquisitions, cataloguing and classification of materials for easy access. User service involves helping clientele find the information they need. It includes showing clients how to search and evaluate information. Administrative services supervise the planning and management of the libraries. It involves handling of contracts for materials, services and equipment. Additionally, as internet and other electronic resources have made it easier for people to get the information they need, the danger now is how to locate the precise information they want. There is also the matter of authenticity and accuracy. Information professionals or librarians provide user education which is required in this environment (Hashim & Mokhtar, 2012). There are also a growing number of librarians who are into “special librarianship and archival work as well as technology-based subfields, such as information organization and discovery, digital or virtual libraries and metadata” (Dukic, 2017, p. 3). Furthermore, Lo, et al. (2016) stated that as a result of technology, librarians now manage the Digital Information System (DIS) in the important areas of imaging technologies, optical character recognition, markup languages, electronic cataloguing, multimedia indexing, database technology, user interface design, programming, and web technologies.

Based on the complex, important and diverse services carried out by librarians and the place of librarianship in the midst of other professions, Ajibero (1993) cited in Olayinka (2008) argued with evidences, confidence and vigor that “librarianship is the mother of all professions, custodian of culture and promoter of scholarship as it (librarianship) provides for existence, growth and survival of all other profession” (p. 2). He stressed in strong terms that librarianship is one of the oldest and still the greatest of all human professions because librarians are pre-occupied with searching for data and information on behalf of others and it is from these data and information that other professions develop their surviving nutrients and strength.

Hashim and Mokhtar (2012) listed some of the professional competencies of a librarian as follows:

- I. Possess deeper understanding of useful information sources, together with the knowledge to expertly appraise and select the suitable ones.
- II. Possess expert knowledge of various subjects suitable for the informational need of the organization or patron
- III. Manages appropriate, accessible and cost-effective information services that supports the organizations strategic plans.
- IV. Delivers outstanding training and assist users of library and information services
- V. Evaluates users' needs and develops marketing strategies and value-added information products to meet identified needs
- VI. Obtain, organize and disseminates information using the suitable ICT.
- VII. Adopts the best management and business methods to communicate the importance of information services to top management
- VIII. Identifies specific information products for both internal and external customers or by individual clients
- IX. Appraises the outcomes of usage of information and undertake research to solve problems associated with managing information effectively
- X. Active member of top management and a consultant to the organization on information issues

### **Image, Status and Perceptions towards the Librarian**

A search in the literature has shown that despite the fact that the work of the librarian is very essential to society, the diversity of the role librarians play and the complexity of their social meaning, there seem to be inadequate recognition of it in the so-called information age, and the profession still lacks the prestige and glamour enjoyed by other professions. For over a century there has been a considerable amount of study on the image and status of the professional librarian. In fact, people's perceptions towards librarians have been negative, which presupposes that the lack of new, young talent entering the library profession may be due to public perceptions of libraries and librarians. A study conducted by Wilson (1982) cited in Cherry, Duff, Singh, and Luanne (2011) revealed by the literature review that about 77 articles from 1921- 1980 had dealt with the image of librarians. There was little evidence that society as well

as librarians themselves graded the prestige and glamour of the information profession high. Furthermore, a study of International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) members found that “librarians had a poor professional self-image, with low view of the professions status and reputation” (Prin & De Gier, 1992, p. 110). This indicates that, librarians themselves may be contributing to the low image experienced by the profession.

According to Newbutt and Sen (2009), in a Canadian survey of over 2000 young new university students, fewer than 40% recognized that librarians require a university education and librarianship as a job title was rated a low prestige job. The students also did not understand the nature of work librarians did and the role they played in society. Most likely, these young people had encountered only School, Public, and Academic librarians and might not be aware of other sectors where librarians worked. The result was a lack of appreciation for their work. Harris & Wilkinson (2004) also surveyed participants at a summer orientation programme of new undergraduates in order to examine students’ perception towards librarians. Participants were supposed to rate the social status of fourteen different occupations, example Lawyer, Computer Analyst, Internet Researcher and Doctor. They were also supposed to indicate how much education each profession required, and the salaries paid to people working in the various professions. The students’ view was that librarians had the lowest social status, while Computer Engineers and Lawyers had the highest. Sixty percent of the students thought that librarians did not require a university education to perform their duties. Again, they expected that librarians were the least paid among the fourteen professions. Harris & Wilkinson (2004) suggested that the students might have rated the social status of librarianship low because they were unaware of the roles librarians played in their working environment.

Another related study by Genoni and Greeve (1997) where School-leavers in Twenty Five Secondary Schools in Australia were investigated to find out their perception about the personal characteristics of a librarian, revealed similar findings. Respondents were supposed to rank those characteristics from the most positive to the least positive response. A positive response was received that showed the librarian was ‘Helpful and Cooperative’. Most importantly however, the response for the characteristics “Interesting and Creative” was negative, implying that the students did not find library work interesting. The study also showed that 91% of the respondents assumed that librarians were females while a large number of respondents felt that most



librarians were between the ages of 40 to 49. Additionally, students ranked the librarian last on their earning capacity amongst other careers of Lawyer, Doctor, Accountant, Dentist, Pilot, Pharmacist, Electrician, Teacher and Nurse. In the same set of careers it was shown that students ranked librarians as the profession which required the least formal education; to the extent that it was ranked below Electrician, an occupation which is not usually entered through a university programme. Santos (2003) also confirmed in his study that artisans and plumbers were rated higher than the librarian.

In view of the above, Aharony (2006) advanced in his research that the professional image of the librarian is one of the topics of concern to the librarian. He claimed that the literature on professional prestige indicates that a prestigious profession derives its strength from Economic and Governmental status. To him in the case of librarianship, Economic and Governmental status is insignificant, rather the main strength of the library profession is found in its management of information, and that the status of a Librarian is low in spite of the information generation. In an effort to explain this, Spaulding (1989) suggested that professional groups like lawyers, doctors and accountants were associated with high status because they are perceived to have a monopoly on the body of specialized knowledge and skills. This is not the case with librarians as they cannot claim a monopoly on information because everyone uses it.

In order to correct the wrong perceptions towards librarians due to ignorance, Agasa (1997) cited in Ajidahun (2004) requested for a complete redefinition of the librarians role. According to him if that is not done, the negative perception of librarians and librarianship will continue to exist. Orimoloye (1983) cited in Fasanya (1984) divulged that, the image of the librarian require substantial enhancement due to the widespread ignorance of others about librarians. In his effort to correct the mistaken image of the professional librarian in Nigeria, Eboka (1984) cited in Olayinka (2008) also contended that “a professional librarian is not just someone who goes about in the library telling readers to keep quiet, or someone who walks about in the library making noise with his hard shoes, or better still someone whose only job is to hand over books to any reader each time they call to borrow them” (p. 2). Moreover, Fleck and Bawden (1995) cited in Aharony (2006) argued that “Library and Information Science is highly regarded and it is perceived as service oriented and not as a dynamic or proactive profession. Librarians are

regarded as unambitious people who find satisfaction in helping others to fulfill their needs. They are efficient, intelligent, and possess specialized knowledge” (p. 239).

To further help eliminate some of these erroneous impressions towards librarians, Asamoah-Hassan (1997) suggested that the professional librarian must back his or her professional skills with interpersonal skills, positive attitude, flexibility, energetic stance, self-confidence, hard work etc. She likewise emphasized on the need for librarians to improve upon their communication skills, be able to communicate and get along well with others, be flexible and accommodate other people’s views and exercise maturity. In addition to these attributes, the librarian must constantly pay attention to their dress and grooming. To her, appearing professionally gives a statement of confidence; appropriate attire or dress and grooming could lead to feeling better about yourself which positively affect behaviour.

The findings of Aharony’s (2006) study, aimed at investigating students perception of the professional image of the Information Scientist and that of the Librarian, showed that traditional roles performed in libraries such as cataloguing and indexing were perceived as tasks of the Librarian, while information retrieval tasks such as building, operating and managing websites, information filtering and matching processed information to users personal needs profile were ascribed to the Information Scientist. The study showed that the professional image of the Information Scientist was ranked higher than that of the Librarian. This led to the situation whereby many school libraries changed their names to reflect the integration of technology in librarianship. For example, the University of California-Berkeley’s School of Library and Information Studies was renamed the School of Information Management and Systems and the Department of Information Science at the University of Pretoria was integrated into the School of Information Technology (Aharony, 2006).

In view of the above, Aharony (2006) raised questions about whether there is a distinction between an Information Scientist and a Librarian or it is just a matter of the name; “Is Information Science the new profession for librarianship? Is Information Science an expansion of librarianship? Are these two disciplines closely related professions? Is Information Science similar to librarianship but with different and modern sounding name?” (p.237). On the part of Stieg (1992) Information Science is just a branch of librarianship with only the integration of the Computer or Technology. In the view of Cosby (2000) although Technology is now part of

librarianship its core activities has not changed. Prins and De Gier (1992) on the other hand, suggested that, a new name or title should be given to the profession. Indeed the stereotypical representation associated with the names 'Library' and 'Librarians' which is based on myths instead of facts have resisted change for many years and maybe a change of name reflecting the Librarians' new image will change the negative perception.

### **Methodology**

The survey method was adopted for this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Form Three students of Presbyterian Senior High Technical School, Okwapemman Senior High School, Mount Sinai Senior High School, Mamfe Girls Senior High School and Benkum Senior High School. Their programmes of study were Business, Technical, Visual Arts, General Science, Agricultural Science, Home Economics and General Arts for 2018/2019. The population size was 3,533. The sample for the study is 353 representing 10% of the population. Proportionate stratified sampling method was used to make sure students offering all the different programmes were represented in the study. To select the required number for each group, simple random sampling was used. The form three students were selected for this study because firstly, they were about to leave school and may be making career choice decisions. Secondly, they may also be considering the programmes to pursue when admitted into tertiary institutions. The instrument for data collection was a self-developed structured questionnaire consisting of closed and open-ended questions.

### **Response rate**

In all, 353 questionnaires were self-administered to respondents in the various schools. Out of which 326 questionnaires were completed, returned and found useable. This represent 92% response rate. Using quantitative approach, data obtained consisted frequencies and percentages, presented using tables.

### **Biographic data of respondents**

The breakdown of data obtained about the gender of respondents indicates that 44.20% (144) were males and 55.80% (182) were females. This shows that females formed majority of the respondents. The data also showed that 35% and 45% were 17 and 18 year old respectively. Thus, the remaining 20% were between the ages of 16 to 20 years. Data sampled on the programmes of study of the respondents disclosed that majority of 48.2% were offering General

Arts, followed by Science, 14.7% and Home Economics 14.7%. The rest in descending order were Business 12.9%, Visual Arts 4.6%, Agricultural Science 3.7% and Technical 1.2%.

### **Students' awareness and appreciation of the librarians' work**

The first objective of this study was to investigate students' awareness of places where librarians worked, their views on duties the librarian performed and the tools used in performing their duties as well as students perception about the gender of most librarians.

### **Places respondents knew librarians work in**

The majority of 318 (97.5%) were of the view that librarians worked at Schools. Another 285 (79.0%) believed librarians worked at Universities. Furthermore, 29.7%, 26.9%, and 19.9% were of the view that librarians worked in Law firms, Private organizations and in Parliament. Also, 19.3%, 18.7%, 9.8% and 9.5% respondents said librarians worked in Courts, Archives, and TV stations respectively. The rest of the respondents 8.8%, 8.8% and 5.2% also indicated Hospitals, Radio stations and Banks respectively (See Table 1). The study disclosed that the respondents were of the view that job opportunities for librarians were mainly available in educational institutions. The students were unaware librarians worked also at places like Hospitals, Banks, Law firms, TV stations etc. This shows that these young people about to leave SHS perceived that job opportunities for librarians were few. The finding is similar to a study conducted by Genoni and Greeve (1997) which showed that due to the characteristics of the respondents (ie Secondary School Students) it was expected that respondents would choose educational institutions such as Schools and Universities as only place where librarians worked.

**Table 1- Places students know librarians work in (N=326)**

<b>Place of work</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Schools	318	97.5
Universities	258	79.0
Law firms	97	29.7
Private organizations	88	26.9
Parliament	65	19.9
Courts	63	19.3
Churches	61	18.7
Archives	32	9.8

T.V Stations	31	9.5
Hospitals	29	8.8
Radio stations	29	8.8
Banks	17	5.2

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **Duties of Librarians**

Respondents were presented with a list of ten tasks and were asked to identify which of them were the duties of a Librarian. Table 2 shows that in their opinion “check in and check out books” 286 (87.7%), help others get information 277 (84.9%) and shelving of books 256 (78.5%), were the major duties of the Librarian. Other duties that few of the respondents pointed out that librarians performed included searching for information on the internet (40.7%) conducting research (40.4%), cataloguing books (34.6%), teaching (25.7%), photocopying (23.9%), managing computers (22.6%), managing databases (18.4%). It was undoubtedly clear the three most recognized tasks by the students were all related to books. The views of respondents confirmed the stereotyping of librarians by many as people who sit idle the whole day, and all they do is arrange and take care of books. Only few respondents identified conducting research, teaching, managing computers and managing databases as tasks librarians performed.

**Table 2- what the duties of librarians entail (N=326)**

<b>Duties of librarians</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Check in and check out books	286	87.7
Helping others get information	277	84.9
Shelving books	256	78.5
Internet information searching	133	40.7
Conducting research	132	40.4
Cataloguing books	113	34.6
Teaching	84	25.7
Photocopying	78	23.9
Managing computers	74	22.6
Managing databases	60	18.4

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **Tools librarians used in doing their work**

This question was asked to help determine whether respondents had fair idea of tools used by librarians to do their work. The findings disclosed in Table 3 that, majority of 276 (84.6%) and 265 (81.2%) indicated that tools used by librarians to work were books and computers. Just a small number indicated that librarians used scanners, microfiche readers, projectors and other tools to work. The low level of awareness was not unusual since majority of the respondents patronized only the school libraries which in most cases lacked the right working tools and equipment (Ohene-Agyekum & Filson, 2012).

**Table 3- Tools librarians use in doing their work (N=326)**

<b>Tools</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Books	276	84.6
Computer	265	81.2
Mobile phone	103	31.5
Printer	101	30.9
Photocopier	88	26.9
Pen drive	88	26.9
Projector	41	12.5
Scanner	39	11.9
Microfiche reader	32	9.8
CD ROM	31	9.5

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **Perceived Gender of Librarians**

Table 4 revealed that majority, 185 (56.7%) thought most librarians were females. Another 125 (38.3%) indicated that most librarians were of both gender. Generally, the findings revealed that the students did not see librarianship to be a profession for males. Only 5.0% believed most librarians could be males. The perception that there were more female than male librarians was expected because over the years the library profession has being more acceptable among the feminine gender (Egunjobi, Taofiq, & Olufelai, 2013).

**Table 4- Perceived gender of most librarians**

Gender of most librarians'	Frequency	Percent
Male	16	5.0
Female	185	56.7
Both	125	38.3
Total	326	100.0

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **Students' Perception of Librarians in Comparison with other Professional Groups**

The second objective was to determine the perception of SHS students' towards librarians'. To achieve this objective, ten professional titles including a Librarian were provided. One trade occupation, Electrician was included. The remaining professional titles includes the so called professional groups that enjoy high popularity (doctor, lawyer, pilot, accountant etc.) respondents were to rank the ten professional titles from the highest to the lowest (1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>) based on five different criteria, namely high education, highest earning capacity, most helpful to society, highest social status and opportunity for career advancement. The findings are presented as the mean score of all valid responses of the students ranking of the ten professions. The highest ranked profession is represented by a low mean score.

### **High Education**

For the criterion high education, Table 5 show the Librarian was poorly ranked, the Librarian was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> with a mean score of 8.225 which is nearly the same as that of the Electrician who scored 8.234. Majority of the respondents ranked the Doctor, Scientist, Lawyer and Pilot as the professional titles that required high education to work in. The Electrician had a mean score similar to that of the Librarian. Suffice to note that, these young people believed librarians did not require much education. To perceive that the librarian did not require more education than the Electrician, a profession which in Ghana was not obtained with a university education was an issue of concern.

**Table 5- High Education**

Doctor	2.561	Teacher	5.966
Scientist	2.700	Nurse	6.064
Lawyer	3.191	Librarian	8.225
Pilot	3.780	Electrician	8.234
Accountant	5.160	Receptionist	9.114

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **Highest earning capacity**

In terms of the earnings of a particular professional title, the Doctor was ranked the highest by respondents, with a mean score of 2.722. The Lawyer followed with a score of 2.796. The third highest score was that of the Pilot with a score of 2.873. The Librarian for this criterion was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> with a score of 8.345. Again, on this criterion, the respondents perceived that librarians were among the least paid professional titles (See Table 6). A similar study by Fagan (2002) of 48 undergraduates from Southern Illinois University showed 79% of the respondents believed librarians received very low salaries.

**Table 6- Highest earning capacity**

Doctor	2.722	Nurse	6.141
Lawyer	2.796	Teacher	6.802
Pilot	2.873	Librarian	8.345
Scientist	3.311	Electrician	8.398
Accountant	4.657	Receptionist	8.950

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **Most helpful to society**

For the professional title that was most helpful to society, Table 7 revealed that the titles Doctor, Teacher, Nurse and Lawyer were ranked among the top four. The librarian with a mean score of 6.820 was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> behind the Electrician (mean 6.092). This means that the respondents were certain that the Electricians job was more helpful to society than the Librarian's job. Even though the Librarian performed better than the Accountant and Pilot, the results of the findings indicated that respondents perceived the work of the Librarian not to be very helpful to society.



**Table 7- Most helpful to society**

---

Doctor	1.981	Electrician	6.092
Teacher	2.495	Librarian	6.820
Nurse	3.808	Accountant	6.891
Lawyer	4.990	Pilot	7.761
Scientist	5.213	Receptionist	8.944

---

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **High social status**

Table 8 clearly shows that the Librarian was negatively ranked by the respondents on the criterion high social status as well. The Librarian was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> by scoring 8.040, indicating that the SHS students' admiration for the profession was low, while the Doctor and Lawyer received a high mean score of 2.302 and 2.931 respectively. On this criterion, the Librarian was ranked above only two professional titles, that of the Electrician and Receptionist. The mean score of the Librarian and the Electrician were again similar (8.040) and (8.056) respectively, displaying the students' lack of respect for Librarians. It was assumed that was the case because majority of the respondents admitted they knew only their School Librarian.

**Table 8- High social status**

---

Doctor	2.302	Teacher	5.314
Lawyer	2.931	Accountant	5.355
Pilot	4.548	Librarian	8.040
Scientist	4.573	Electrician	8.056
Nurse	5.242	Receptionist	8.635

---

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **Opportunity for career advancement**

The last criterion sought to find out the professional title that respondents believed could offer better opportunities for career advancements. The findings show that the Teacher was ranked the highest, scoring 3.096, followed closely by the Doctor who scored 3.965 (See Table 9). The Nurse, Lawyer and Scientist also followed in descending order. The Librarian was ranked 7<sup>th</sup>,

showing that these young people perceived librarianship to be one of the professional titles without prospects for career advancement.

**Table 9- Opportunity for career advancement**

Teacher	3.096	Accountant	5.654
Doctor	3.965	Librarian	6.274
Nurse	4.856	Pilot	6.495
Lawyer	4.968	Electrician	6.806
Scientist	5.249	Receptionist	7.632

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **Interest in becoming a Librarian or not**

The third objective was to ascertain whether or not the respondents were interested in becoming librarians. Analyzed data in Table 10 shed light on the respondent's interest in becoming librarians after school. Majority of 278 (85.3%) would not consider becoming librarians. Only 48 (14.7%) would give librarianship a thought as a career option. One major reason expressed by the students' was their lack of knowledge and understanding of the library profession. Their responses also revealed their lack of respect for the profession which might be as a result of the condition at their school libraries.

**Table 10- Considering becoming librarians in future**

<b>Librarianship as future career</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	48	14.7
No	278	85.3
Total	326	100.0

**Source: Field Data, 2019**

### **Reasons why librarianship appeals or does not appeal to students**

Participants who might consider librarianship as a future career would do so because they were of the view that librarianship (i) helped people to know more about books; (ii) helped people to do research; (iii) instills in the youth the habit of reading; (iv) could be a good second job to do if they were unemployed; (v) would help them acquire more knowledge; (vi) provides help to the society; and (vii) could be applied in all other professions. The views of respondents were

consistent with studies by Berry (2007) and Newbutt & Sen (2009) that suggested love of books, reading and interests in helping people attracted young people to the library profession. On the other hand, for those who would not consider librarianship as a career indicated that (i) they had no idea about librarianship, and if not for the study they did not know that one could pursue librarianship at the university; (ii) they considered librarianship as the last choice of one's career opportunities; (iii) librarians were believed to have low level of education; (iv) they did not know the importance of a librarian and what it takes to become a librarian; (v) their parents would be disappointed in them; (vi) in Ghana, librarians were not respected by the society; (vii) librarians were underutilized; (viii) they could not sit idle the whole day taken care of books; (ix) librarians did not earn enough money; and (x) they didn't know how to arrange and keep books. The views of respondents were similar to that of Hallam and Partridge (2005); Alansari (2011) and Adanu & Amekuedee (2010) whose findings revealed that respondents did not find librarianship as a profession that offered them future prospects of better salary, good career opportunity, job security and job satisfaction.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study show that young people do not have appreciable knowledge and understanding of what librarianship entails. The findings disclosed that the students did not have considerable idea about the different places a librarian could work and tools used to work. Most importantly, the findings in general imply that librarianship as a profession and librarians had low profile amongst young people. The students perceived the work of librarians to be boring, less challenging, tedious and unpopular, had low earning capacity, provide less economic rewards, not respected by society and not interesting. Additionally, the respondents ranked the librarian low in all the five criteria considered in the study, indicating that their perception of librarians was negative. Finally, the study also established that students of the five schools investigated, were unwilling to become librarians after they have left school, indicating that young people in general were not interested in becoming librarians.

## **Recommendations**

- Academic librarians and professional associations such as the GLA must increase awareness of the profession by engaging in campaigns/ drives programmes. This could be done during the school's speech and prize-giving day, annual anniversary celebrations or

during career talks. With these awareness campaigns/drives in place, the negative perception of students towards librarians may begin to change. They may begin to notice that the librarian plays a very significant role and provides services beyond the work they usually see them do.

- There is need for librarianship to be promoted. This could be done through the use of the media (print and electronic), magazines, newsletters, brochures and tracts.
- This study disclosed that young people lack interest in the library field. This may be as a result of the very poor state of most school libraries in the country. The equipment and materials needed to make libraries function effectively are nonexistent. The school libraries must therefore be well equipped by the authorities.
- In Ghana, most staffs in charge of school libraries are not trained librarians. There is need for them to attend training programmes in librarianship to be upgraded or enroll in library schools. This could help correct the negative perception of young people that librarians do not require higher education.

## References

- Adanu, T., & Amekuedee, J. (2010). Factors Influencing the Choice of Librarianship as a Course of Study at the Diploma Level in Ghana. *Information Development*, 314-319.
- Aharony, N. (2006). The Librarian and the Information Scientist: Different Perceptions Among Israeli Information Science Students. *Library and Information Science Research*, 28, 235-248.
- Aina, L. O. (2004). *Evaluation of Librarianship in Library and Information Science Text*. Ibadan: Third World Information Service Limited.
- Ajibero, M. I. (1993). Librarianship, The Mother of All Professions. *Leading Libraries and Information Centers*, 1 (3 and 4 ), 26.
- Ajidahun, C. O. (2004). Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria Decree and the Future of Librarianship in Nigeria. *Gateway Library Journal*, 7(1), 32.
- Alansari, H. A. (2011). Career Choice, Satisfaction and Perceptions about their Professional Image. *Library Review*, 60, 575-587.

- Alemna, A. A. (1991). The Characteristics and Careers of Past Post-Graduate Diploma Students of the Department of Library and Archival Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, 1981/1982-1987/1988. *African Journal of Library Archives and Information Science*, 45-50.
- Asamoah-Hassan, H. R. (1997). The Librarian's Image and the Perception of Libraries: A Barrier to Library Development in Ghana. *Ghana Library Journal*, 31-36.
- Atkinson, J. (1994). The Image of the Academic Librarian: An Analysis of the Implications for the Future through a Study of the Literature. In C. Harris (Ed.). *The New University Library*, 89-100.
- Berry, J. N. (2007). Job Satisfaction: Great Work, Genuine Problems. *Library Journal Archive Content*(1), 1-5.
- Busayo, O. I. (2017). Choice of Librarianship as a Career: A Case Study of FUOYE Poineer Library and Information Science Students. *IJoLIS*, 2, 59-67.
- Cherry, J. M., Duff, W. M., Singh, N., & Luanne, F. (2011). Student Perceptions of the Information Professionals and their Master's Program in Information Studies. *Library and Information Science Research*, 33, 120-131.
- Cosby, O. (2000). Librarians: Information exports in the Information Age. *Occupation Outlook, Quaterly*, 4(4), 2-15.
- Dukic, Z. (2017). Choice of Career in Library and Information Science and Past Experience. *Journal of Library and Information Science*, 1-16.
- Egunjobi, A. F., Taofiq, M. S., & OlufelaI, O. (2013). Academic Profile and Career Choice of Fresh Undergraduates of Library and Information Science in a Nigerian University of Education. *Annals of Library and Information Studies*, 296-303.
- Fagan, J. (2002). Students Perceptions of Academic Librarians. *Reference Librarian*, 78, 131-148.
- Fasanya, J. O. (1984). The Image of the Librarian. *Lagos Librarian*, 11(1 and 2), 53.

- Genoni, P., & Greeve, N. (1997). School-leaver Attitudes Towards Careers in Librarianship: The Result of a Survey. *Australian Library Journal*, 46(3), 288-303.
- Ghana Statistical Service. (2014, October). *2010 Population & Housing Census: District Analytical Report, Akuapem North Municipal*. Retrieved October 6, 2018, from [http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010\\_District\\_Report/Eastern/AKUAPEM%20NORTH.pdf](http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010_District_Report/Eastern/AKUAPEM%20NORTH.pdf)
- Hallam, G., & Partridge, H. (2005, May 5). *Great Expectations? Developing a Profile of the 21st Century Library and Information Student: a Queensland University of Technology Case Study*. Retrieved October 22, 2018, from [http://archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla71/papers/047e-Hallam\\_Partridge.pdf](http://archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla71/papers/047e-Hallam_Partridge.pdf)
- Harris, R., & Wilkinson, M. A. (2001). Re-Positioning Librarians: How Young People View the Information Sector. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 42(4), 289-307.
- Hashim, L. B., & Mokhtar, H. W. (2012). Preparing New Era Librarians and Information Professionals: Trends and Issues. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(7), 151-155.
- Lo, P., Chiu, K., Dukic, Z., Cho, A., & Liu, J. (2016). Motivation for choosing Librarianship as a Second Career Among Students at the University of British Columbia and the University of Hong Kong. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*.
- Newbutt, S., & Sen, B. (2009, August). *What Impression do Young People have of Librarianship as a Career*. Retrieved September 24, 2018, from [www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/books](http://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/books)
- Ohene-Agyekum, B., & Filson, C. K. (2012). The Challenges of School Libraries after the Implementation of the New Educational Reforms in Ghana. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, paper 932.
- Olawanle, S. M., & Abayomi, K. O. (2010). Librarianship as a Career Choice in Ogun State, Nigeria. *Chinese Librarianship: an International Electronic Journal*(29).

- Olayinka, F. (2008). Choosing Librarianship As A Career: A Study of Public Secondary School Students in Ekiti State. *International Journal of African & African American Studies*, VII(2), 1-8.
- Prin, H., & de Gier, W. (1992). Image, Status and Reputation of Librarianship and Information Work. *IFLA Journal*, 18, 108-118.
- Prytherch, R. (2005). *Harrods Librarians Glossary and Reference Book* (10th ed.). England: ASHGATE.
- Santos, A. M. (2008, April 21). *The Professionalization of Librarians in the Philippines: The Role of Library Associations in Management of Library Associations*. Retrieved October 10, 2018, from <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/papers/134e-Santos.pdf>
- Sare, L., Bales, S., & Neville, B. (2012). New Academic Librarians and their Perceptions of the Profession. *Libraries and the Academy*, 12(2), 179-203.
- Spaulding, F. H. (1989). Image of the Librarian/Information Professional: A Special Libraries Association Presidential Task Force. *IFLA Journal*, 15, 320-329.
- Stieg, M. (1992). *Change and Challenge in Library and Information Science Education*. Chicago: ALA.
- Timiyu, M. A., Akussah, H., & Tackie, S. N. (1999). Changes in Perceptions and Motivation of Archives and Library Students During Training at the University of Ghana. *Education for Information*, 17, 295-314.