Career Interest among Library and Information Science Undergraduates in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

The study investigated career interest of Library and Information Science undergraduates in Nigerian universities. The purpose of the study is to identify career interest, the level of ICT competency and adequacy of LIS courses in meeting the career interest of undergraduates. Survey research method was employed and the study population comprised LIS undergraduates in Nigerian universities. Purposive sampling technique was used to select five library schools and they include: University of Ibadan, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Maiduguri, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Federal University of Technology, Minna. Thus, 400 undergraduates were selected and adopted for the study. Questionnaire was the main data collection instrument used. The 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researchers and colleagues from the sampled library schools, out of which 281 were completed and returned, giving 70% response rate. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that majority of respondents indicated "information science" as the most career interest while the lowest ranked career interest was "archival management". On ICT skills competency, majority of the respondents declared low level. On the adequacy of the departmental courses to attain career interest, majority of the respondents signified positively to the adequacy. The paper suggested that more ICT courses be incorporated to the library schools" circular to enable undergraduates withstand the modern challenges. The undergraduates are equally encouraged to embark on self development for information literacy skills. The library schools

should make computer laboratories very functional with adequate equipment and personnel.

Keywords: Library schools Nigerian universities, under-graduates, career interest, survey research.

Introduction

The growth and development of any society revolves around its economy, health, education, socio-cultural and technology. These fundamental factors stand as bases for classifying a nation into either "developed" or "developing". The effectiveness and efficiency of such factors however depend on accessibility of relevant and adequate information. Information right from the ancient period has been an influential impetus for development which is presently described as essential commodity and the fifth factor of production.

Information is a major instrument for effective decision making and job productivity. There is no profession that can function well without the supply of relevant information. To Issa (1998), a combination of experience and new knowledge will bring about information, which is quite vital to the healthy development of both individual and society at large. This is to the extent that development and prosperity have come to be as knowledge -- based so also they depend on the dissemination and application of different types of information.

The assembly of accumulated information, records and documents in whatever format (print, non-print and electronic), points to the primary responsibility of a library or information center. The library is the right information center where the right information can be provided to the right user in the right format and at the right time. In fact, an ideal and a well-organized library ensures at satisfying the principles of S.R. Ranganathan which state that "Every book its users",

"every user his/her book" and "do not waste the time of user." As such, users should be allowed free access to the needed and relevant information.

Libraries, archives, information and documentation centers according to Oketunji (2001) have critical roles to play in the collection, organization and dissemination of information for the advancement of individuals, groups, organizations, nations and human society. These forms of efforts can only be carried out by those who have received professional training in librarianship. In essence, libraries or information centers cannot function efficiently and effectively without appropriate skilled personnel who are dedicated to their jobs (Gongchi, 2008).

With the relevance of modern technology, the information resources are not in printed format alone but also in variety of formats. The technology has actually revolutionized the techniques of selecting, acquiring, processing organizing, preserving, disseminating and retrieving of information. The accessibility and use of information are more enhanced with the application of computers and other technologies without any geographical barrier. Omekwu (2004) has highlighted certain internal and external factors that make the adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the libraries mandatory. The internal factors include acquisition and introduction of computer and IT based system such as CD-Rom or Diskettes; IT skills, installation of Local Area Network (LAN), access to inter-national databases such as AGRIS, CABI, etc. and speed of services. The external factor include global trend in the information environment, resources sharing and cooperation with external agencies, access to electronic information resources, professionalism, external donation, computers and IT systems as well as access to electronic information resources (Omekwu, 2004). Without any doubt, these factors would also influence the library

schools to restructure their circular towards the modern trends.

In the light of the foregoing, there are a lot of challenges facing library and information science education in Nigeria. In librarianship just like other professions, the traditional methods of rendering services is astronomically becoming obsolete thus, the need to acquire modern skills for the purpose of relevance. In any profession to Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), no issue is more contentious than the form of professional education and training required of its practitioners.

It is pertinent to note that the modern trend is not only a challenge to the library schools and educators but also to their products. The relevance of Library and Information Science product is to a large extent determined by the degree of required skills, knowledge and norms that have been acquired by him/her. Change is regarded as the most constant element in the society and it thus has effect on every profession. It is against the backdrop of the emergency trends in library and information science education that Mohammed (2003) avers that:

> The need for provision of library and information science education and the acquisition of relevant knowledge, techniques and skills for effective and efficient library and information work is needed now more than ever before due to differences in library and information system, service and infrastructure to cope with the changing needs and expectations of the 21st century people, societies, communities and institutions.

In this modern world, libraries can no longer claim to be sole providers of information because many professionals have sprung up and even becoming a threat to library and information practitioners. This according to Issa (2002) is as a

result of an increasingly diversified information fields which is being controlled by professionals who are adept at the application of the new technology. Presently, the relevance of practicing librarians depends on their zeal to acquire a further training and skills in the contemporary techniques of information provision. In the same vein, the enhancement of career prospects for library and information science graduate is a major challenge to library schools which train the prospective professionals.

Librarianship right from its inception has diverse career paths. This shows that a well-groomed product of library school has the potentials of working in various establishments Afolabi (1991) enumerated about twenty five occupational opportunities to the library and information science professional, such as: teaching, library practice, consultancy, publishing, editing, proof reading, record management, information brokerage, indexing, abstracting, to mention but few. Nwalo (2001) believes that Nigeria will become an information society in the 21st century. This development according to him will result in great expansion in information activities, thus the librarians especially the cataloguers who will pilot the organization of information for societal development are expected to have greater employment opportunities and face greater challenges. Igbeka (2008) was of the view that it is automatic that librarians can now be part of management executives in companies because of their empowerment in the provision of information. It is in this recognition that this study intends to investigate the career interest and prospects of library and information science undergraduates in Nigeria universities.

Purpose of the Study
The study was designed to achieve the following purposes:
1. To identify the career interest of undergraduates in Nigerian library schools;

2. To determine the level of ICT competency of undergraduates in Nigerian library schools;
3. To determine the adequacy of Library and Information Science courses in meeting the career interest of undergraduates.

Methodology

Survey research method was employed for this study while the undergraduates of the 25 LRCN accredited university-based library schools in Nigeria constitute the study population. The list of the 25 LRCN accredited university-based library schools is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: List of LRCN Accredited University-Based Library Schools in Nigeria

S/No	Library Schools *	Year of Establishment	Geopolitical Zones
1.	University of Ibadan, Ibadan	1960	South-west
2.	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	1968	North-west
3.	Bayero University, Kano	1977	North-west
4.	University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri	1978	North-east
5.	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	1986	South-east
6.	Imo State University, Owerri	1990	South-east
7.	Abia State University, Uturu	1990	South-east
8.	Baze University, Abuja	NA	North Central
9.	Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma	1991	South-south
10.	Delta State University, Abraka	1991	South-south
11.	Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka	1991	South-east
12.	University of Calabar, Calabar	1994	South-south
13.	Madonna University, Okija	1999	South-east
14.	University of Uyo, Uyo	1999	South south
16.	Federal University of Technology, Minna	2001	North-central
17.	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	2005	North-east
18.	University of Ilorin, Ilorin	2006	North-central
19.	Benue State University, Makurdi	2006	North-central
20.	Umaru Musa Yar'Adua University, Katsina	2006	North-west
21.	Federal University of Technology, Yola	2008	North-east
22.	Adeleke University, Ede	NA	South-west
23.	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	NA	South-east
24.	Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode	NA	South-west
25.	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai	NA	North-central

* Source: www.lrcn.gov.ng

To select the sampled population, purposive sampling technique was employed to select the following five library schools where 400 undergraduates were selected.

1. Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan;
2. Department of Library and Information Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria;
3. Department of Library and Information Science, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri;
4. Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
5. Department of Library and Information Technology, Federal University of Technology, Minna.

Questionnaire was the main research instrument and it was designed to include: Name of library school respondents' biodata, career interest/prospects, levels of ICT-competencies; and adequacy of departmental courses. Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were administered by the researchers and colleagues in sampled library schools. The collected data were analyzed using tabulation, frequency counts and percentages.

Results of the Study
Response rate showed that out of 400 copies of questionnaire administered, 281 were returned and found usable showing a response rate of 70%. The reasonable response could be attributed to the fact that the questionnaire was not only self-administered by the researchers but also by some colleagues in the institutions understudy.

Table 2: Response Rate of Respondents

Library Schools	Frequency	Percentage (%)
University of Ibadan, Ibadan	50	18
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	55	20
University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri	69	24
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	49	17
Federal University of Technology, Minna	58	21
Total	281	100

Table 2 revealed that out of the total respondents of 281, 69 (24%) were from University of Maiduguri and it is the highest. The lowest respondents were from University of Nigeria, Nsukka library school with 49 (17%).

Table 3: Level of Undergraduate Programme

Level	Gender Male	Female	Frequency	Percentage (%)
100	24	21	45	16
200	46	49	95	33
300	33	28	61	22
400	37	27	64	23
500	07	09	16	06
Total	147(52.5%)	137(47.7%)	281	100

The findings also showed that the highest number of respondents 95(33%) were 200 level undergraduates, 64(23%) from 400 level, 61(22%) from 300 level while 100 level has 45(16%) (as shown in table 3). The lowest numbers of the respondents were however from 500 level, this is because only Federal University of Technology, Minna runs five years of undergraduate programme.

Table 4: Ranking of Career Interest of LIS Undergraduates

Rank Order	Career Interest	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Information Science	161	57
2.	Librarianship (Practicing)	148	53
3.	Records Management	128	46
4.	Systems Analysis & Design	120	43
5.	Information Business	114	41
6.	Librarianship (Lecturing)	114	41
7.	Administration / Management	108	38
8.	Publishing	105	37
9.	Information Brokery	104	37
10.	Archival Management	28	10
	Total	1,130	

Table 4 above showed career interest of LIS undergraduates in the responding Nigeria universities by rank order. The 1,130 total frequency is attributed to the fact that a respondent is expected to tick each alternative response indicating in a

ranking order his/her career choice. The study revealed that information science topped the list with 161 (57%) points. It is not surprising because it is a broad discipline that encompasses all other aspects on the table. This was followed with 148 (53%) points went for librarianship. (Practicing) while the lowest points for archival management with 28 (10%). This showed that archive contains both historical and outdated materials which have research value.

Table 5: Level of ICT Competency of LIS Undergraduates

Level of ICT Competency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very high	22	08
High	77	27
Low	172	61
Very low	10	04
Total	281	100

Table 5 above showed the responses of undergraduate students on the level of ICT competency in Nigerian library schools. The findings showed that majority of respondents 172 (61%) indicated low level of ICT competency, 22(08%) declared very high while only 10 (4%) exhibited very low level of ICT competency. By implication therefore, the LIS undergraduates in Nigerian universities exhibited low level of ICT competency.

Table 6: Adequacy of Departmental Courses for Career Interest of Undergraduates

Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	20	7.1
Agree	144	51.2
Disagree	67	23.8
Strongly Disagree	50	17.8
Total	281	100

Table 6 revealed the levels of agreement on the adequacy of departmental courses in attaining undergraduate' career interest / prospects. The study revealed that majority of

respondents, 144 (51.2%) agreed to the adequacy of departmental courses to the attainment of their career interest/prospects. In other words, while 164 (58.4%) respondents signified positively to the adequacy of the courses, 117 (41.6%) had a contrary opinion.

Discussion

Career interest and prospects of LIS undergraduates were examined and the study found that "information science" was the popular career with 161 (14%) respondents. The finding corroborates with the opinion by Nwalo (2001) who emphasized that Nigeria will become an information society in the 21st century that will result in great expansion in information activities. The level of ICT competency were examined and found that majority of respondents 172 (61%) exhibited low level. This corresponds to the findings of Gongchi (2008) who believed that libraries and information centers cannot function efficiently and effectively without appropriate skilled personnel that are committed to their jobs.

The adequacy of departmental courses to attain career interest of the respondents were examined and discovered that 164 (58.3%) signified positively to the adequacy. This is in support of the assertion made by Mohammed (2003) that the provision of LIS education and acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and techniques for efficient / effective library work are now needed. This is because of the differences in library and information system, services and infrastructure to face the realities of the 21st century societies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Sequel to the fact that every profession depends on information for effective service delivery, library and information science education will continue to be relevant in the society. It is pertinent to note however that the degree of its relevance will be determined by the nature of knowledge,

skills, norms and techniques given to the potential professionals. Since there are diverse career paths for products of Nigerian library schools, it is appropriate for undergraduates to develop interest that gear towards certain career in the course of training as a means of empowerment. This is more important presently when the government job is no longer easy to secure but self-empowerment.

Based on the findings of this study, the Nigerian library schools are urged to incorporate more ICT courses into their curricula so that the undergraduates are provided with expository knowledge on the modern technique of information service provision. In addition, the undergraduates are equally encouraged to embark on self development for information literacy skills.

The theoretical teachings of ICT courses are not enough in making students skillful and competent but with adequate practical. Consequently, the computer laboratories in library schools should be made very functional with adequate equipment and skillful personnel.

To boost the empowerment capability, students should be appropriately guided and monitored on the type of establishments to be chosen for their SIWES programme. It is believed that a right place of choice for SIWES will afford students the opportunity of acquiring relevant skills which can facilitate their recruitment in various establishments and self-recruitment after graduation.

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