

## DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY IN NIGERIA.

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### Abstract

*This paper argues that library profession in Nigeria has witnessed remarkable developments in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, which include increase in the number of library schools; designing and modifying of library schools' curriculum to meet employers' demand in labour market; availability of job opportunities for LIS graduates/professionals beside the four (4) walls of libraries; registration and license of qualified professional librarians as well as effective and efficient provision of library and information services using ICTs. It points out that despite these developments, the Library profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Nigeria is faced with challenges: which include divergent curriculum among library schools; obstacles to the effective provision of library services, challenges in the labour market as they affect LIS graduates; inadequate teaching staff in library schools; delay in the current registration and licensing of professionals, non-registration of B.A/B.Sc. Library Science holders by LRCN and digital divide among Nigerian Libraries. It is recommended that the new "reviewed LIS curriculum in Nigeria" be adopted by all Nigerian library schools; LIS professionals be attracted to teach in library schools; through good pay package to reduce brain-drain syndrome. Others include registration of professionals by LRCN should be a continuous exercise; while adequate ICTs especially computers be made available in library schools' computer laboratories in order to cater for adequate acquisition of IT skills by students.*

### Introduction

Libraries since the time immemorial have been in existence and have passed through revolutionary stages (agricultural, industrial and information ages respectively). Their

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existence is not only to acquire, process, organize and store but also to disseminate information to users on request. History of libraries world wide can be traced using the three (3) eras: Ancient times, Medieval time, and the Modern times (Aina, 2004). Talking about the 21<sup>st</sup> century of librarianship as a profession is akin to talking of information age. This is so because the information age has permeated every facet of human life (education, agriculture, health, information, culture, labour market, business etc). For example, recruitment of candidates into Civil Service, Military and Para-Military sectors is now through ICT.

The objective of this paper, therefore, is to examine some of the developments that have taken place in the field of librarianship as well as some of the challenges or factors that negatively affect the profession in moving forward in Nigeria in the present information age.

#### Feature of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century of Librarianship in Nigeria

These are itemized below:

1. Increase in the number of Library Schools
2. Curriculum content of Nigerian Library Schools
3. Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN)
4. Job opportunities for LIS graduates/professionals
5. Provision of Library and Information Services

#### Number of Library Schools

Tracing the historical development of library education in Nigeria, Ochogwu (1992) shows that between 1960s and 1980s, Six (6) library schools were established in Nigerian universities. These include the pioneer library school, University of Ibadan, (1960), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (1968), Bayero University Kano (1977), University of Maiduguri (1978), University of Nigeria Nsukka (1986) and Imo State University Owerri (1992). As revealed by Aina (2007), the number of University-based Library schools in Nigeria stood at 18 as at the year 2007. The increase in number of library schools might be attributed to the establishment of more universities and other tertiary institutions which necessitated the need to employ more qualified hands to man the affairs of the academic libraries and other types of libraries in Nigeria. It is expected that as the number of library schools increases both in Universities and Polytechnics the schools should be able to meet the manpower needs in both public and private sectors, profit and non-profit-oriented organizations. There is the need to train and produce more professionals in the field of librarianship. Some of the University-based library schools that were established in 1999 to date include the following:

Madona University, Okija	1999
Anambra State University of Science and Technology, Ulli	2000

Federal University of Technology, Minna.	2001/2002 session
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	2005
Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai	2006
Umaru Musa Yar'Adua University, Katsina.	2006
University of Abuja, Gwagwalada	2006
Benue State University, Makurdi	2006/2007
University of Ilorin, Ilorin	2006/2007
Federal University of Technology, Yola	2008/2009

**Source:** *Correspondence with professional colleagues*

However, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai is yet to take off with any of the programmes in librarianship. Similarly, Rivers State University of Science and Technology Port-Harcourt got approval to commence the BLS programme in the 2006/2007 session (NLA Newsletter, 2006), but correspondence with a colleagues in the RSUST library as at December, 2010 shows that the library school is yet to take off with the BLS programme.

The increase in the number of library schools is not confined to universities alone but also to some polytechnics and colleges of education such that between eighties and beyond the increase has created the demand for more librarians (Ochogwu, 2009).

**Curriculum Content of Nigerian Library Schools**

The curriculum content of Nigerian Library Schools were geared towards meeting employers/labour market demand and most University-based library schools design, modify and / or review their curricular to reflect the Information and Communication Technology components. Assessing the undergraduate ICT curriculum content of some University-based library schools in Northern Nigeria Saka (2009) revealed that most library schools surveyed had gone beyond the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2009) approved minimum academic standards by incorporating more Information and Communication Technology (ICT) courses into the undergraduate curriculum. The new reviewed Library and Information Science (LIS) curriculum (2008) as stated in the (NLA Newsletter, 2008/2009) would carter for the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century library and information specialists if adopted by all library schools in Nigeria.

At postgraduate level, there are higher degree specializations in LIS discipline e.g. Information Science, Information Management etc. For example, the pioneer library school in Nigeria (University of Ibadan) runs (Postgraduate programmes) e.g. Master degree programme in Information Science, Information Management, Health Information

Management etc (Prospectus, 2006). It is also worthy to note that Abia State University (ABSU) Uturu (Library School) has commenced B.Sc and PGD Library and Information Science in 2007/2008 as well as Ph.D. Library and Information Science in 2008/2009 session respectively (NLA Newsletter, 2008/2009).

The curricula of Nigerian library schools are subject to review from time to time. The timely review is not only to modify but also to incorporate courses that are in line with the employers' demand in the labour market. Such courses include IT courses, records management. Publishing and book trade etc.

### Job Opportunities for LIS Professionals

Arising from the curriculum review and modifications is the prospects for more job opportunities for LIS graduates/professionals which are beyond the four (4) walls of library. A graduate of LIS can be a consultant, Public Relations Officer, Publishers, Information Officer, Manager, Lecturer, Information broker, Banker etc. It is in recognition of this fact that Igbeka (2008: 129) observed that:-

*Librarians and information specialists now have limitless career opportunities. Librarians can now automatically become part of Management and Executives in companies since they now hold the key power which is "provision of information".*

### Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN)

The LRCN have come upstream to register and license the LIS professionals/librarians thereby regulating entrants/practice in the LIS profession in Nigeria. The LRCN is a parastatal under Federal Ministry of Education that was established by Decree 12 of 1995. The council was inaugurated on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2002. As revealed by LRCN Newsletter (2011), the first batch of 536 librarians were registered and inducted as chartered librarians in 2005 by the LRCN. While some National dailies e.g. Daily Trust of July 6, 2011 confirmed the chartered of 1,777 librarians by the LRCN in 2011. This can be traced back to the highlight made in the Nigerian Library Association Newsletter (2008/2009) on the inclusion of LRCN in its 2009 budget of Federal Ministry of Education. This marks the first step towards recognizing librarians and library profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through the decree No 12 of 1995. Thus Ifidon (2008:36) opined that: "by the librarians (Registration etc) decree 12 of 1995, government has recognized library and information science as a profession..."

### **Provision of efficient Library and Information Services**

Unlike the traditional library services which are characterized by delay and errors in the provision of services to clients; the introduction of ICT has made libraries to provide efficient and effective library services than before. House-keeping operations such as acquisition, cataloging, classification, reference services are now offered using ICT. Some University libraries equally digitized their undergraduate projects and postgraduate theses/dissertations and other information resources thereby preserving the original documents. Write-up by Ndor (2004), Kastina (2006) and Saka and Akor (2008, Mohammed (2009) reveal that University libraries in Nigeria are currently digitizing their theses/dissertations and other traditional printed resources.

### **Challenges of Library and Information Science Profession in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Despite the numerous developments in librarianship in Nigeria, one cannot claim that there are no challenges in LIS profession in Nigeria as one of the developing countries of the world. However, some of the challenges are as follows:

#### **Divergent Curriculum of Nigeria Library Schools**

Studies of the curriculum of library schools in Nigeria as revealed by Nwosu (2007) and Saka (2009) show that library schools run divergent curriculum when compared to National Universities Commission (NUC, 1999) minimum academic standards. Until the new review LIS curriculum (2008) is adopted to have a uniform/harmonized curriculum to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Nigerian Library Schools shall continue to operate divergent curriculum which may create knowledge gap among products of various Library Schools in Nigeria as the Information Science/ICT knowledge gain by products of particular library school may not be the same with products in another library school(s). This fact may not be far the submission of (Saka, 2009) on the undergraduate ICT courses in university-based library schools in Northern Nigeria as contained in the table below:

Table 1: list of Undergraduate “Information Science/ICT Courses” in University-Based Library Schools in Northern Nigeria

Abu Zaria	Bayero University Kano	University of Maiduguri	Fed. Uni. Of Tech., Minna
Computer information work	LIS 1203 Intro. To ICT	LS 103 Intro. to Computer	CPT 111 Comp. Sci. Orientation
Intro. To Telecom.	LIS 2204 Principles of Inf. Mgt.	LS 405 Automation in Library	CPT 122 Intro. to Inf. Tech.
Intro. to Digital Info. Services	LIS 3210 Intro. to Inf. Science	LS 403 Media Librarianship	LIT 214 Information Management
Rural Inf Systems & Services	LIS 3216 Electronic Inf Resources	LS 411 Inter. Lib. Cooperation & Information Networks	Computer Programming I CPT 221 Computer Programming II
Intro. Inf. Computer	LIS 4203 Inf. Analysis & Repackaging		CPT 213 Intro. Computer Systems
Operating System	LIS 4204 ICTs		LIT 222 Inf. Tech. & Society
Business Inf. System	LIS 4208 Developing Inf. Infrastructure		CPT316 System Analysis & Design
Special Inf. System	LIS 4213 Inf. System Component		LIS 318 Data Comm. & Networks LIT 322 Information Management II LIT 323 Inf. Searching & Use LIT 325 Database Design & Mgt.
Intro. to Applic. Packages	LIS 4215 Computer Practical II		LIS 32 Operating System II
Oral Tradition/Oral Inforamation	LIS 4207 Res. Sharing & Networking		LIS 413 Information Science
Inf. Resources Development			CPT 413 Sys. Operations Research CPT 416 Software Design & Mgt
Information Management in library			LIT 513 Inf. Retrieval Systems LIT 514 Implications of Information Tech. LIT 518 Inf. Products & Services CPT 519 Computer Installation & Mgt. LIT 522 Library Automation

Sources: Dept of LIT Handbook (FUT, Minna) 2001-2006, 15-36  
Abubakar, T. (2005) Zaria Journal of Librarianship 8 (1&2), 28-36  
Bello, N. (2005), Zaria Journal of Librarianship 8 (1&2), 16-22  
Dept. of Lib. & Inf. Sc. BUK, Kano  
Dept. of Lib. Sc. University of Maiduguri

*Culled from Saka, K. A. (2009). Paper presented at 14<sup>th</sup> NALISE Conference, 2009*

#### Problems in the Provision of Library Service

The provision of library services in conjunction with the use of ICT in Africa, of which Nigeria is inclusive, is being militated by a number of problems. They include, among others: poor telecommunication infrastructure and telecommunication services; erratic power supply, limited computers, lack of skilled manpower and or inadequate skilled manpower were among the problems of ICT use in Africa as found by Ojedokun (2007). The writers/authors of this paper were of the opinion that the provision of library services were being militated also by limited book supplies, journals and multimedia resources.

#### Challenges in Labour Market (Practical IT Skills)

Even with the fact that there are a lot of job opportunities for LIS graduates/professionals, there is likelihood that the LIS graduates may face the problem of employment in future. Gwarzo (2003, Posits that library schools in Nigeria are not present information age. This results from inadequate acquisition of practical IT skills on the part of undergraduates students. This is further worsened by the limited number of computers available in IT laboratories in some library schools. As revealed by Saka (2009), there are only 74 computers available in IT laboratories of four University-based Library schools in Northern Nigerian with 1,740 undergraduate students.

#### Inadequate Teaching Staff in Nigerian Library Schools

The proliferation in the number of library schools pose challenges on how to equip library schools with adequate teaching staff more especially those to equip library schools with adequate teaching staff more especially those of the rank of Associate professors and professors. Nigerian library schools suffer from inadequate staffing. It is in recognition of this trend that Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) posits that both the old and new library schools relied on part time lecturers. Few years back, some Departments of Library and Information Science in conjunction with universities advertised for academic staff vacancies. An example is the Federal University of Technology, Minna (Punch, August 3, 2009; Daily Trust August 10, 2009).

### **Delay in the registration and non-registration of some LIS graduates/professionals**

The LRCN have come up stream licensing holder of professional qualifications (BLS and or MLC, Ph.D. Library Science) as demonstrated in the year, 2005 when the first batch of 536 Librarians were registered and licensed. The second batch of 1,177 librarians were registered and chartered in the year, 2011 (Daily Trust, July 6, 2011). The second induction ceremony took place on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2011; six years after the first induction ceremony. The challenges lies not only on the slow pace of the exercise due to the expiration of the tenure of LRCN board members (NSLA Newsletter, 2006/2007) but also non-registration of some first degree holders in librarianship which may be due to combine honour of their first degree in librarianship as products of some library schools hold B.A or B.Sc Library Science/Sociology, English, Political Science, Chemistry, Physics, etc. According to LRCN, this qualification is a combine honour instead of single honour such as BLS, or possession of MLS, PGD or Ph.D Library Science. It is in relation to this that Oladele, (2010:5) asserted that:

*The Act specifies those qualifications hat are registerable with the council and that the holders of such qualifications can be designated as librarians. These qualifications include; ALA; B.A/B.Sc + Postgraduate Diploma in Library Studies; BLS; MLS. The law is silent on the other qualifications.*

LRCN is reviewing applications that fall into this category of B.A or B.Sc Library Science (combined honour) degree for possible registration.

### **Digital Divide Among Libraries in Nigeria**

This is a phenomenon whereby libraries and other information centres do not have equal access to ICT in terms of provision and use of information. As cited in Ani, Esin and Edem (2005), Ahiauzu (2008) maintains that Federal Universities in Nigeria have available and more opportunities to the use of ICTs than the state universities. Academic libraries relatively adopt and use ICTs more than public libraries in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Having examined some of the developments and challenges in Library and Information Science profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Nigeria; the following suggestions are proffered:-

1. The newly reviewed LIS curriculum in Nigeria should be adopted so as to have a uniform curriculum for all library schools in Nigeria;
2. Strategies be adopted not only to attract qualified teaching staff to library schools but also well paid packages be adopted thereby discouraging brain-drain syndrome on the part of LIS professionals.



3. The registration and chartering of qualified professionals should be on continuous basis without long delay.
4. Library schools in Nigeria should endeavour to procure more and adequate ICTs, especially the computers in order to ensure adequate practical IT skills acquisition by LIS students. To achieve this, adequate funding is required. On the other hand well equipped ICT laboratories with stand-by generating plant, adequate internet facilities and system analysis should be made available.
5. Management of various institutions and establishment should ensure that ICT facilities are not only provided but also the problem of erratic power supply and network be tackled so as to solve the problem of digital divide existing among libraries in Nigeria.

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